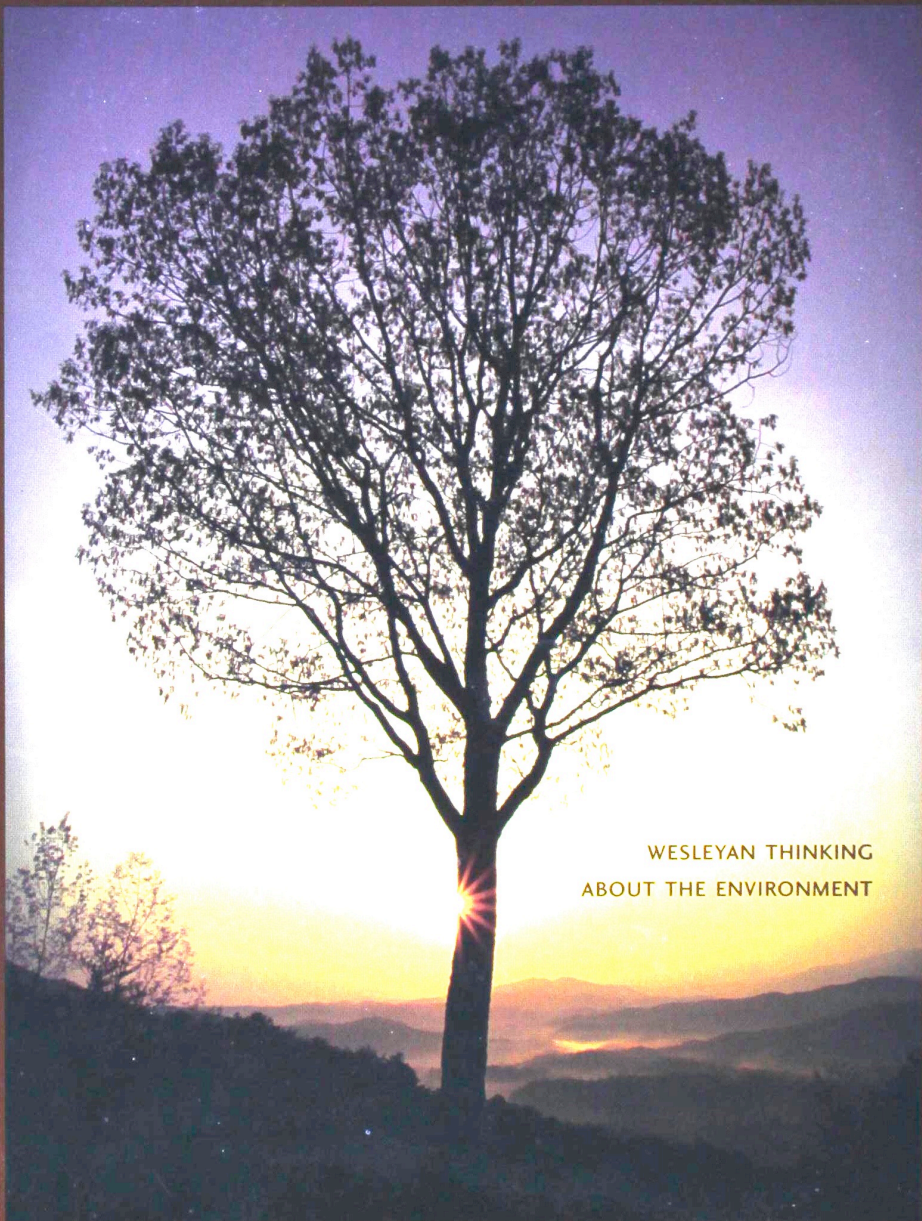


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WESLEYAN THINKING
ABOUT THE ENVIRONMENT

The Asbury Journal

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EDITOR'S NOTE

Religion's Role in the Environmental Movement

The religions must become involved in the environmental movement. For many reasons, a couple of which we will mention below, deforestation, soil decline, water management, over fishing, over hunting, invasive species, population growth/decline, human-caused climate change, toxic chemicals, energy shortages, and loss of photosynthetic capacity are problems that will not be solved unless the religions endorse their solution. There will be no progress on environmental issues until religions become part of the cipher.

The good news is that the religions are increasingly becoming involved in the environmental movement. In this issue of *The Asbury Journal*, we feature several Wesleyan voices who give biblical, theological, and historical rationales on why being a good Christian means being a good environmentalist. Not only is the case self-evident and ironclad, Christians are beginning to hear and act on the issues. Yes, the religions are involved in the environmental movement.

The bad news is that some scientists continue to be wary about religion's involvement. Some have been downright hostile. Evolutionary biologist Stephen Jay Gould thought religions and science should be kept totally distinct. Richard Dawkins thinks that God is a faulty, even bad hypothesis when measured by scientific standards. Philosopher of science Daniel Dennett has attempted to reduce what we call revelational religion to a naturalistic phenomenon, a product of our genes and our social environment. And Sam Harris — well, arguing that all religion is bad because of a few bad religious people is raising the *ad hominem* argument to a new level of absurdity.

This despite all evidence to the contrary about religion's value. Indeed, if the above mentioned scientists handle their experimental data the same way they handle the historical and empirical data about religion, then we have cause to worry about the scientific endeavor in general. Two facts seem clear: the ubiquity of religion, and its positive value.

As to the ubiquity of religion, it does not take a computer-generated model to look at the history of the human race and see the ubiquitous presence of religion in human affairs. People, all people, everywhere, anywhere, have been religious. Whenever attempts have been made to eliminate religion from human life—one thinks, for example, of twentieth century Marxist movements—utter failure results.

As to religion's positive value, we don't have space to list all the contributions to human flourishing religion has made—in education, social services, medical care, mental health, happiness, and on and on. But let's focus on just one, the environment. One of the most disheartening revelations of the effects of Leninism on the Soviet Union, was the utter disregard for the care of their natural resources. Post-Soviet revelations showed that when you remove the rationale for creation care—that the world is created by God for human stewardship—creation care seems to disappear along with it.

What is it about religion that makes it an indispensable part of the success of the environmental movement? Consider two of the more obvious factors:

The fact that the physical world exists and that it hosts a marvelous, even mysterious, network of living things, cannot be explained by big bangs, infinite computer regressions, or chance, the staple scientific attempts at explanation. Only the religions satisfactorily explain the fact of the world. It is true that the language of their explanation can seem esoteric; but no more esoteric than scientific jargon used for the same purpose.

Why should science consider the religions' explanations to be true? Set aside for a moment the religions' own warrants for truth. Consider only scientific ones. The religious explanations are the best theories going. Science always accepts the best theories on the field until better ones are provided. At the moment, at least, the religions have the best theories. Or simplicity. When compared with the murky explanations one gets when scientists begin to grope with beginnings, the religious explanations are crystal clear. Until something much better comes along, science needs the religions' explanations of why the world is. For religious people (over 90 percent of the world's population by the way), the world becomes sacred precisely because of its mode of creation.

And that sacredness leads to a second contribution of religion to environmentalism. Because the world is sacred, we are motivated to care for it in a way that pure utilitarian motivational attempts cannot begin to approach. Human beings are notorious for engaging in behaviors that they find pleasurable but are proven to be bad for them. Smoking. Speeding. Overeating. Littering. Not flossing one's teeth. The list is dishearteningly long.

It does no good to point this out to people. They persist even when they know—are convinced—that what they are doing is bad for them. And it certainly does not do any good to chastise people for this negative behavior. People do not become smarter just because someone tells them they are dumb. It is most often not a case of people's ignorance. Instead of berating people for their behavior, a more powerful, more positive motivation is needed.

Enter religion. Religion is, by definition, an individual's most powerful motivator. A person's religion is what he or she considers the final court of appeal, the last in a chain of considerations for deciding whether a thought, feeling, or action is good or not. If a person's religion says that the environmental movement is a good thing, something to pay attention to, then a person is most likely to decide to support it.

That's why the environmental movement needs religion to succeed.

— *Terry C. Muck*

Howard A. SNYDER

*Salvation Means Creation Healed:
Creation, Cross, Kingdom, and Mission*

Abstract

Global warming, hurricanes and violent storms raise fundamental questions about how Christians understand the relationship between God, human beings, and the entire created order. The issue is not just the ethical one of responding to environmental concerns; it is the more basic one of the nature of salvation itself as revealed in Scripture. Salvation through Jesus Christ by the Holy Spirit is the story of God redeeming and healing his creation, and this in turn defines the nature of Christian mission.

For multiple reasons explored here, evangelicals have often neglected or positively denied Christian responsibility to address ecological issues. This is a hole in the evangelical worldview that can be addressed only by paying renewed attention to biblical teachings on creation, the disease of sin, redemption, and new creation.

The Bible speaks of the “groaning” of creation but also of the New Creation promise that all creation will be liberated, healed, and restored. Examining biblical teachings on creation, sin and predation, atonement and healing, and the work of the Holy Spirit throughout God’s salvation plan yields a comprehensive trinitarian view of creation healed. Jesus’ atonement and resurrection is a cosmic-historical act through which all creation is redeemed—potentially and partially now, and fully when God’s kingdom comes in fullness.

KEYWORDS: environment, creation, healing, ecology

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*They will not hurt or destroy on all my holy mountain;
for the earth will be full of the knowledge of the Lord
as the waters cover the sea — Isa. 11:9*

*The creation itself will be set free from its bondage to decay and will
obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God — Rom. 8:21*

What is the role of creation in God's plan of salvation? How are we to understand biblically, theologically, and missionally the relationship between God, ourselves, and the world in which God has placed us?

Severe hurricanes in the United States and Mexico, and disastrous storms and flooding elsewhere in the world, have made us more conscious of human dependence on the cycles of nature. Erratic weather patterns have also prompted theological debate about the environment and how it should be understood from a Christian standpoint. In the fall of 2006 Bill Moyers hosted a PBS program with the title, "Is God Green?"

Scientific climate research over the past few decades has taught us that floods, hurricanes, and similar disasters are not "acts of God" but are "natural" phenomena that can be made worse by human action. In the United States, for example, hurricane devastation is worsened by the destruction of absorbent coastal wetlands and also by rising ocean temperatures through pollution from automobiles, power plants, and other sources.

Christians, then, need to think clearly about God's creation — both its goodness and its groaning; both as God's gift and as the environment within which God is reconciling "to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, by making peace through the blood of [the] cross" (Col. 1:2). This is a matter of theology, of discipleship, and of Christian mission.

Consider:

A missionary couple in São Paulo, Brazil, is working to plant churches among newly arrived poor folks from the interior. But the missionaries and the people they work with are increasingly bothered by the worsening pall of air pollution over the city. The Good News they proclaim is transforming people's lives. Does it have anything to say also about transforming the air?

Christians in a north African country are having to flee drought and

famine caused largely by the destruction of forests and other ecological problems. They find strength and comfort in the gospel of Christ. Will they also find gospel answers to ecological disaster?

Scholars at a Christian university in Asia learn that certain species of birds are disappearing, but no one knows why. Is this of any concern to the gospel? How far does gospel transformation reach?

Creation, New Creation, and Christian Mission

We proclaim our faith in the Triune God, maker and sustainer of heaven and earth. God sent the Son into the world in the power of the Holy Spirit to bring redemption and the new creation that is the kingdom of God. This is the “mission of God,” *missio Dei*. God the Spirit is still active in creation to achieve his purpose. “God is still at work in this creation and not just its maintenance engineer,” Eugene Peterson reminds us (Peterson 2005:93)

The church is in mission because God is in mission. God loved the world so much that he sent his only Son to give us eternal life through faith in him. Therefore the church is to love the world and bring the Good News to people everywhere. Biblically speaking, this Good News is the healing of creation. Faithful mission therefore encompasses not only personal evangelism, compassion, and social justice; it includes proclaiming and living out God’s intention for the whole creation.

The gospel of Jesus Christ is based on what the Bible teaches about creation, redemption, and transformation through Jesus Christ. It envisions an eventual transformed new creation. The new creation we now experience through Jesus Christ (2 Cor. 5:17) is the firstfruits not only of our own salvation, but of all creation healed.

Scripture presents salvation as an immense divine plan for the redemption of all creation, “the restoration of all things” (Acts 3:21). We read in Ephesians 1:10 that God has a plan (*oikonomia*) for the fullness of time to bring everything in heaven and earth together in reconciliation under the headship of Jesus Christ — *all things*, things in heaven and things on earth; things visible and invisible. The plan of redemption is as broad as the scope of creation and the depth of sin, for “where sin abounded, grace [has] much more [abounded]” (Rom. 5:20 KJV).

Significantly, the Bible grounds God’s glorious work in Jesus Christ in both creation and redemption. Jesus Christ is both “the firstborn of all creation” and “the firstborn from the dead” — affirmations that unite creation and redemption (Col. 1:15, 1:18; cf. John 1:1–14). In the book of Revelation, God is praised in hymns celebrating both creation (Rev. 4:11) and redemption through the blood of Christ (Rev. 5:9). In the Old Testament the Sabbath, so full of eschatological portent, is grounded both

in creation (Ex. 20:11) and redemption from Egyptian slavery (Deut. 5:15). In Genesis, God establishes covenants both for the preservation of creation (Gen. 9:8–15) and for redemption (e.g., Gen. 17:1–8). In multiple ways Scripture weds the themes of creation and transformation. Redemption can never be understood in a fully biblical way unless the full story of creation, and not just human creation, is kept in view.

Salvation through Jesus Christ by the Holy Spirit is thus the story of how God is redeeming and transforming his creation. And he calls us into mission with him to bring the healing of creation. The main story line can be summarized in five points:

1. *God created the universe.* “By faith we understand that the worlds were prepared by the word of God, so that what is seen was made from things that are not visible” (Heb. 11:3). Therefore the world belongs to God, not to private individuals, economic enterprises, or national governments. Therefore we have no right individually or corporately to mistreat it or claim it solely for our own interests. Human beings are stewards of what God has made.

2. *The created order is in some deep sense diseased because of sin.* Although earth’s nonhuman biosystems cannot sin, the created order suffers the “enmity” that human rebellion brought into the world (Gen. 3:14–19). “The creation was subjected to futility” and is in “bondage to decay” (Rom 8:20–21). This complex spiritual-physical-moral-ecological disorder is pictured graphically in Old Testament passages such as Hosea 4:1–3:

There is no faithfulness or loyalty, and no knowledge of God in the land. Swearing, lying, and murder, and stealing and adultery break out; bloodshed follows bloodshed. Therefore the land mourns, and all who live in it languish; together with the wild animals and the birds of the air, even the fish of the sea are perishing.

Disorder, disease, disharmony crying out for healing through the Word of God.

3. *God has acted in Jesus Christ to reconcile the creation to himself.* God is bringing transformation and re-creation through the God-Man. In the biblical vision, God acts in Jesus Christ not to save people *out of* their environment, but *with* their environment. Just as God will not ultimately save us without our works, as Wesley taught, so God will not ultimately save us without his good creation—his great good work, human and nonhuman.

The New Testament makes clear the tremendous cost of Jesus’ reconciling work—his life of obedience and suffering, his death on the cross. Precisely because Jesus “humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death,” God “highly exalted him and gave him a name that is

above every name,” and all creation will bow before him (Phil. 2:8–11). All will submit to him, and the time will come “for destroying those who destroy the earth” (Rev. 11:18).

As both Savior and Model, Jesus calls all who believe in and follow him to a life of discipleship and stewardship, marked by the cross. True disciples of Jesus are to “walk as he walked” (1 Jn. 2:6). Jesus forms a community marked by the cross, participating in the birth pangs of the new creation.

4. *God has given the church a mission for this world and the world to come.* The redemption God is bringing promises a new heaven and a new earth. But what does this mean? Biblically, it *does not* mean two common but extreme views: It does not mean only saving the earth from oppression or ecological collapse. And it does not mean disembodied eternal life in heaven, with the total destruction of the material universe. Rather, it means a reconciliation between earth and heaven; the heavenly city descending to earth (Rev. 21:1–2); the reign of God that is in some way the reconstitution of the whole creation through God’s work in Jesus Christ. The model for the new heaven and earth is the literal, physical resurrection of Jesus.

5. *We are called to live our lives, churches, communities, and economies in harmony with biblical principles of justice, mercy, truth, and responsible interrelationship.* We thus learn to think interdependently in all areas, including in our understanding of the church and our relationship to the earth. Christians (and in fact all humanity) have a God-given responsibility to “care for the garden” (cf. Gen. 2:15). Good news for the earth, for all God’s “creatures great and small,” is an integral part of redemption and new creation in Jesus Christ through the Holy Spirit.

But if this is true, why do so many Christians not take creation care seriously?

Misunderstanding Creation

Biblical teaching on creation is clear enough. Yet, because of the distortions of sin which have worked their way into all human cultures, humanity persistently misunderstands creation.

This is true even in the church. Biblical teachings get distorted by philosophies, ideologies, and economic and political realities to the point that Christians miss the import of fundamental biblical teaching concerning creation. This makes it difficult for Jesus-followers to grasp the biblical meaning of creation—and therefore of creation healed.

“Nature”: Four Distorted Views

The biblical view of “Nature” — that is, the created order — often suffers distortion in four ways:

1. *Romanticism.* Prominent in Western culture especially since the nineteenth century, Romanticism views nature as the primary source of

beauty and truth. In our creative, imaginative engagement with nature we find meaning, truth, even transcendence. Nature lifts our thoughts and feelings to the sublime. Christianity has not been unaffected by this; many Christians have a more romantic than a biblical view of the created order.

Romanticism embodies both truth and error. Since all creation in some sense “images” God’s beauty and creativity, we do resonate with the beauty of nature. We revel in the colors of flowers and sunsets; we marvel at the intricacy and complexity of life forms and the vast structure of the universe. We hear “the music of the spheres.”

But this is only half the story. Nature is “red in tooth and claw,” as Tennyson wrote.² The animal kingdom is full of violence, predation, death—billions of creatures great and small devouring and being devoured. Scripture is frank about this. The biblical worldview is not romantic; it recognizes the fallenness and transitoriness of nature. “The grass withers, the flower fades; but the word of our God will stand forever” (Isa. 40:8).

Yes, the created order *is* a source of beauty and of truth—the beauty that comes from God’s profuse creativity and the truth of creation’s beauty and sublimity—and also the truth of its violence, fallenness, and bondage to death. We can enjoy and glory in the beauties of nature and yet see that something is deeply wrong in the created order—a creation-wide disease only God can heal.

2. *Commodification.* In contemporary Western culture, the romantic view of nature is largely overshadowed by another view: commodification. If poets are romantics, capitalists are commodifiers. Nature means “natural resources”; the created order is mere raw material for profit-making.³

As with romanticism, the view of nature as commodity, as “raw material” and natural resource, contains both truth and error. Yes, the earth is rich and bountiful, though not limitless, in resources to sustain human life. God has set this good earth under our dominion and it is proper to use it prudently. But the earth belongs to God, not to humans. It does not belong to private individuals, to nations, or to corporations, whether local or transnational. “The earth is the Lord’s, and the fulness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein” (Ps. 24:1 KJV). Dominion means that the earth is to be held in trust for all humanity, including unborn generations. Nowhere does Scripture grant the absolute right to exploit creation for profit; to turn the whole earth into a commodity. Since the universe belongs to God, *all* humans are responsible to God for their use and abuse of the earth (and all planets) and all humanity must be held accountable to the common good. In fact *God* holds us all accountable for our responsible, sustainable stewardship of the created order. Commodification is not the biblical worldview; it is an exploitive distortion and a dangerous delusion.

3. *Worship.* Some people worship nature. The created order is divinized; becomes a god. The Apostle Paul pronounces God's judgment on those who have "exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever!" (Rom. 1:25).

This ancient view—nature and its forces as god, or gods — is still common today. We find it in New Age mysticism and in various forms of pantheism — even in some strains of Christian theology. The key biblical distinction between Creator and creation gets lost or blurred; nature, God, and ourselves become pretty much the same thing.

There is, of course, a grain of truth here. Nature is sublime in the sense that it can open our minds and spirits to the spiritual, the transcendent, as romanticism teaches. But nature is not God. We face the constant temptation of idolatry here. Idolatry can take the form of out-and-out nature worship, but it can take subtler forms of our worship of ourselves, another person, our cars or houses or books, our culture, our music, our land, our "right" to use and abuse the earth solely for our own purposes. Worship is a matter of one's ultimate, dominating concern. If our dominant concern is with our own rights, our own stuff, our own land—even our own culture or nation—we are worshipping the creation rather than the Creator.

What do we worship? What are our idolatries? Do we worship God alone, and treat his good creation as gift through which we can worship and serve him more fully?

4. *Spiritualizing.* Christians can fall prey to any of these distorted views of the created order. But perhaps the greatest temptation is an unbiblical *spiritualizing* of the material world.

Spiritualizing is the view that creation has no value in itself, but only as it points us to spiritual realities. When we spiritualize that which is physical and material, we veer from the biblical understanding and actually open ourselves up to the distortions of romanticism and commodification. Romanticism: We enjoy nature, but only because it "lifts" us to "higher, loftier," spiritual truths. And thus commodification: Since the material world has no value intrinsically, we can do with it what we will, using and abusing it for our purposes without regard to its own integrity and well-being.

Spiritualizing the material world has become the dominant worldview of popular American Evangelicalism. Matter has value only to the degree that it (1) sustains our physical and economic life and (2) teaches us spiritual lessons, reminding us of what is *really* important.

But this is not the biblical view. God did not degrade himself in creating material things; rather God honored and dignified matter by bringing it into existence through his own power — and supremely by incarnating his own Son within the material creation.

So there is truth and error in spiritualization. The truth, biblically speaking, is that all creation is shot through with spirit, spiritual reality, spiritual significance. This is inevitable because its very existence comes from God's energy. This is why biblical figures and metaphors and Jesus' parables work. Material things do teach us spiritual lessons.

But this is only half the biblical teaching. The other half is that the created order has its own reality, its own integrity, its own purpose, dignity, destiny, and "right to exist" because it comes from God's hand and is sustained by God. Jesus Christ "sustains all things by his powerful word" (Heb. 1:3).

Jesus-followers should renounce unbiblical distortions and see the created order as Scripture presents it. We must inhabit it as it truly is, viewed from the standpoint of God's creation of, continuing involvement with, and ultimate plans for the universe. We will not romanticize nature, but recognize its beauty and its violence. We will not simply commodify the material world, exploiting it with disregard to God's ownership and the common good. We will not worship nature, obscuring the line between Creator and creature. And we will not spiritualize the material world, forgetting that the earth in its materiality and physicality is good and integral to God's whole plan of salvation — the healing of creation.

The Hole in the Evangelical Worldview

Reflecting on these four distortions helps us identify a major problem with popular Christianity today. Why don't evangelicals, in particular, take stewardship and creation care more seriously? Why are efforts to confront climate change, species depletion, and the protection of lakes, forests, and rivers often viewed as politically misguided or even ethically wrong? Concern about environmental stewardship is viewed as representing a subversive political agenda that is anti-God and probably anti-free enterprise.

This is a puzzle. Evangelicals claim to believe in the full authority of the Bible. Yet in the United States especially, evangelicals for the most part read the Bible in such a way as either to positively exclude creation care, or to relegate it to such a low priority that it gets lost among other concerns. My impression from living most of my life in the evangelical community is that most American evangelicals simply *do not believe* that the Bible teaches creation care as an *essential* part of the Good News of Jesus Christ, or that it must be an indispensable part of faithful Christian witness.

This aversion to creation-care concern is a gaping hole in the evangelical theological ozone layer. Sub-biblical views of the environment rush in and the biblical perspective gets filtered out.

This hole in the evangelical worldview comes into clear view when we

trace the path Western Christianity has traveled. We can spot seven historical developments that have tended to distort contemporary evangelical (and to a lesser extent Wesleyan) Christian worldviews. Together these seven developments largely explain the four distortions noted above.

The key elements in this sevenfold barrier are: (1) the theological inheritance from Greek philosophy, (2) the impact of the Enlightenment, (3) *laissez-faire* capitalism, (4) American individualism, (5) uncritical patriotism, (6) a general neglect of the biblical doctrine of creation, and (7) premillennial dispensationalism. Let's examine each briefly.

1. *The inheritance from Greek philosophy.* In the second and third centuries, the Christian church had to come to terms with the Greek philosophical tradition which was intellectually dominant in the Roman Empire. Early Christian apologists did a masterful job of showing the coherence of the Christian faith even when understood through Greek philosophical categories. The fruit of this interaction included such breakthroughs as the Nicene and other early creeds which established an essential theological consensus on Christology and the Trinity.

A price was paid, however, for these achievements. In a step away from biblical teachings, Christian theology came to view the material world as separate from and strictly inferior to the spirit world. Since it participates in change and decay, matter was seen as imperfect, tainted, and therefore something to be escaped. Human changeability, including physical passions, was to be overcome or transcended. In what became classic Christian theism, God, as pure spirit, was seen as unchangeable and impassive. The Christian ideal was to deny or escape from the material world into the world of the pure spiritual contemplation of God.⁴

In Western theology, this unbiblical "spirit is perfect, matter is imperfect" view became deeply imbedded through the writings of Augustine of Hippo (354–430), whose theology was strongly shaped by neo-Platonic thought. Augustine so emphasized original sin as to in a measure eclipse the original goodness of creation — the affirmation of the image of God in humankind and the secondary imaging of God's glory in nature. Though Augustine did see creation as displaying God's glory, he did not seem to value the very materiality of creation as God's good gift.

The ideal Christian life in medieval Christendom — though it was not the actual *lived* life of the great majority of Christians — was escape from the world with its changeability and its passions. The natural world was a mere symbol, a metaphor pointing towards a higher eternal spiritual reality. It had little value in itself. For many the ideal, even if unattainable by most, was the saint who left the world and all material possessions and lived in the contemplation of God.

This tradition offers much that is good and true. It produced great devotional writings that still nurture us. But it upset the biblical balance, with disastrous consequences for the environment. The holistic biblical understanding was replaced by a split-level and hierarchical worldview in which pure, immaterial spirit was at the top and changeable, decaying matter was at the bottom. Spiritual growth was therefore, self-evidently, a journey of ascent from the material to the spiritual.

Much of this inheritance is still with us, especially in our hymns and devotional writing. But this split-level view is fundamentally unbiblical.

2. *Enlightenment rationalism.* Orthodox Christian theology rejected many of the central claims of the Enlightenment, with its over-reliance on reason. But Christian thinking has been leavened by it, all the same. In endorsing science and the scientific method, Protestant Christians largely accepted the subject-object split. Human beings were subjects examining “objective” nature. The natural world was increasingly objectified — something to be studied, subjected to technique, and used for human purposes.

This legacy has been positive in manifold ways. It has yielded the scientific, technological, and material advances that we enjoy today. But again, a price was paid theologically. Since the material world was already viewed as secondary and transitory, there was no ethical problem in dominating and using it — exploiting it — for human purposes. Nature was “here” objectively to serve us. It was the God-given natural resource for human higher purposes, with virtually no ethical limitations on the human manipulation of the earth. Air and water pollution created by industrialization, which disproportionately poisons the poor, were minor annoyances compared with the benefits of new technologies and inventions. Environmental issues were not moral questions unless they directly threatened human health. Rather they were merely technological challenges to be conquered. The legacy of this view is both an over-confidence in reason and technology and an under-valuing of the earth.

3. *Laissez-faire capitalism.* Capitalism is also part of our inheritance from European history. As an economic system, its roots go back before the Enlightenment. It grew out of the rise of cities in late-medieval Europe (also the lucrative trade in Crusades-acquired Christian relics and heirlooms!) and later was greatly fueled by the rise of the Industrial Revolution in England in the eighteenth century. Adam Smith published his *Wealth of Nations*, the Bible (almost literally) of capitalism, in 1776.

Capitalism has been the main engine of economic growth and prosperity in the Western world. It has brought tremendous material, economic, and in some cases political benefits. Combined with science, technology, and industrialization, it led to today’s globalized economy. It is a key reason for the high standard of living in so-called “advanced” societies.⁵

But here again, a price was paid. From the beginning, critics of capitalism warned of two major negatives: Its power to enslave and exploit the poor (especially laborers) who had no capital and therefore little economic power, and the power of wealth to enslave the wealthy. Although historically speaking the most revolutionary critique of capitalism was Marxism, many Christian voices have been raised over the centuries in criticism of the moral dangers of capitalism. In our day one of the most prophetic voices has been Pope John Paul II.

From a biblical standpoint, the primary critique of capitalism should be obvious. Human beings are corrupted by sin and will therefore use the freedom and power they possess to selfish ends and to exploit others. Capitalism is an effective way to “store up treasures on earth” — the very thing Jesus warned against. Yet Jesus’ warnings and prohibitions regarding wealth are seldom heard in our churches. Preachers denounce sins of personal and sexual behavior but often ignore greed and laying up earthly wealth.

Surprising numbers of Christians have bought the central myth of capitalism: that the self-centered pursuit of profit inexorably works for the common good. It is very difficult to defend this biblically. Most Christian critique of capitalism has argued that this myth is true *only* if there are effective mechanisms, through government and/or the church, to limit the subversiveness of greed and the worst effects of capitalism.

Partly because of the factors mentioned above (Greek philosophy, Enlightenment rationalism), evangelicals have tended to view economics as a realm unto itself, operating with its own morality, walled off from and independent of normal considerations of Christian ethics. Economic growth is by definition good, and the pursuit of wealth can never be questioned, for it is the engine that drives the economy. The “invisible hand” of the marketplace is viewed practically as sacred, not to be slapped or fettered.⁶

This is not *biblical* morality. It contradicts Jesus’ teachings and does violence to the biblical worldview. Biblically speaking, *nothing* operates outside God’s sovereignty or the ethics of God’s moral law and the Sermon on the Mount. All economic systems, capitalism as well as communism and socialism, must be subject to thorough-going Christian critique. As with the prophets of old, Christians should be particularly outspoken in exposing the forms of exploitation that are most dominant in our age.

This is a key issue for environmental stewardship for a very basic reason. Capitalism depends upon the exploitation of natural resources. This was true of early industrialism, which relied heavily on coal and steel, but it is just as true today. All the key ingredients of the information age—plastics, silicon, copper, uranium, petroleum — come from the earth. Here most

North Americans apply a simple moral equation. Since economic growth is by definition good, the exploitation of natural resources is morally necessary and not fundamentally to be questioned. This moral equation is compounded by the fact that most corporations simply do not take into account the depletion of natural resources as a real economic cost, even though in fact it is. Quite the opposite: in the United States the tax system works such that many industries are actually given tax credits for the depletion of natural resources rather than being expected to pay for the depletion.

Many evangelicals thus oppose the protection of the environment because they see environmental regulations as an unfair burden on economic growth. And since spiritual, not material, things are what really matter; and since the material world has no real value in itself (points one and two, above) there is no theological principle to be invoked here in defense of the earth.

Biblically speaking, something is wrong with this picture. Responsible, humane capitalism can be a great blessing, but unfettered capitalism becomes inhumane and can destroy us and destroy the earth. North American society has long recognized this in some areas, protecting the public through interstate commerce regulations, pure food and drug laws, limitations on the exploitation of labor (especially child labor), and some minimal regulation of air and water pollution. Exploitation of God's good earth, however, has been largely overlooked (Snyder and Runyon 2002:143–46, 175–78).

4. *American individualism.* This also contributes to evangelical dis-ease with environmental issues. The “rugged individualism” of North American culture tends to work against a sense of mutual responsibility and interdependence with the common good and for earth stewardship. Nature is something to be conquered, subdued, fought against, overcome, not something to be nurtured or cared for.

Here also there is a positive and a negative pole. The strength of American society traces in large measure to the freedom for individual initiative. American society provides space for the entrepreneur, the innovator, the “self-made man.” But as many studies have shown—more recently, Robert Bellah, et al., in *Habits of the Heart* (1985) and Robert Putnam in *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community* (2000)—the downside to such individualism is the lack of a sense of social solidarity and mutual responsibility. Anyone who has spent much time in Europe must be struck with the fact that American society is considerably more individualistic even than is European society.

Today individualism is further compounded by consumerism and materialism. Much of society is dedicated to the promotion, purchase,

and then speedy replacement of brand-name products whose prices bear little relationship to the actual cost of manufacture. We live in a branded society that in multiple ways daily contradicts Jesus words that a person's life "does not consist in the abundance of possessions" (Lk. 12:15).

Individualism compounded by consumerism undermines creation care in several ways. Although the heritage of American individualism often celebrates the values of living simply with nature (Thoreau, for example), in its contemporary form it insulates human experience from the natural environment so that people have little feel for our *actual* dependence on the welfare of the environment. And since material prosperity in its present form depends on the unfettered production of goods, evangelicals like other Americans resist any environmental restrictions that would (hypothetically) put a brake on or add cost to such production. This is a myth, of course; more and more businesses are discovering that environmental stewardship results in cost savings.

A biblical theology of creation and the environment must address squarely the problem of individualism if it is to be persuasive.⁷ The Bible teaches the mutual interdependence of the human family and its dependence on the well-being of the earth.

5. *Uncritical patriotism.* A fifth ingredient in the mix that undermines a sense of environmental stewardship is unreflective patriotism. Nationalistic patriotism leading to arrogance, empire-building, and an exploitive attitude toward other nations and peoples seems to be a constant of history. When nations become enamored of their own greatness, however, they lose sight of God's concern for all earth's peoples and the welfare of creation and fall under God's judgment (Ezek. 31).

Understandably, the United States has seen a great upsurge in patriotic fervor since September 11, 2001. But unreflective patriotism is a long-standing dynamic in American history — as well as elsewhere in the world.

Love of country is good and proper, but when it leads to disregard for the well-being of other lands and peoples, it becomes a plague. When patriotism or nationalism turns into ideology, and when criticism of one's government becomes unpatriotic, we are in grave danger. Nationalism can be idolatry.

Christians should see uncritical patriotism as a theological problem. The Bible teaches that Christians are part of a new humanity, citizens of a new nation: the kingdom of God. The New Testament is very explicit about this. Christians are "citizens" and "members of the household of God" (Eph. 2:19). "You are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people, in order that you may proclaim the mighty acts of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light" (1 Peter 2:9). Christian identity thus transcends national or political identity. Biblical Christians

understand that they are first of all citizens and patriots of the kingdom of God. Allegiance to one's own nation is necessarily secondary to kingdom allegiance. True Jesus-followers understand that Christians in other lands — including Iraqis, Iranians, and North Koreans — are their own brothers and sisters in Christ, nearer and dearer to them than their fellow Americans who do not acknowledge Jesus. They are therefore as concerned for the welfare of people in these lands as they are for the welfare of the United States. Naturally, therefore, Christians will see creation care in global, not just national, perspective.

6. *Neglect of the biblical doctrine of creation.* In their understandable focus on personal new creation — salvation through the blood of Jesus Christ — evangelicals often neglect the prior biblical doctrine of creation itself. Yet any doctrine of redemption will be deficient if it is not based on what the Bible teaches about God's acts in creating the world.

Evangelical theology often lacks a robust biblical theology of creation. Evangelicals have rightly emphasized God as the source of the created order but have not reflected deeply on the *nature* of the created order and the mutual interdependence it implies between humanity and the physical environment. Nor have they reflected deeply enough on what creation tells us about new creation — God's plan of redemption. Biblically speaking, the doctrine of new creation depends upon a right understanding of the original creation.

In practice, evangelical theology often begins with Genesis 3 rather than Genesis 1. All are sinners in need of God's saving grace. But biblical theology does not begin with sin; it begins with creation. Human beings—man and woman together — are created in the image of God and placed in a garden which also reflects God's nature. If man and woman embody the image of God in a primary sense, the created order images God in a secondary sense. The beauty, order, coherence, and intricate design of the universe reveal something true and essential about God (Rom. 1:20).

Scripture consistently grounds God's glorious work through Jesus Christ by the Spirit in both creation and redemption. Jesus Christ is both "the firstborn of all creation" and "the firstborn from the dead" — affirmations that unite creation and redemption (Col. 1:15, 1:18). In the Book of Revelation, God is praised in hymns celebrating both creation (Rev. 4:11) and redemption through the blood of Christ (Rev. 5:9). In the Old Testament, the Sabbath, so full of eschatological portent, is grounded both in creation (Ex. 20:11) and redemption from Egyptian slavery (Deut. 5:15). It is remarkable the way Scripture consistently holds together the themes of creation and redemption. The biblical doctrine of redemption through the cross presupposes the doctrine of creation, and redemption can never be understood in a fully biblical way unless the full story of creation, and

not just human creation, is kept in view.

7. *Premillennial Dispensationalism*. In the 1800s a new theory arrived on the scene: premillennial dispensationalism. This innovation, despite little biblical or historical basis, has become immensely influential in popular American Christianity, in part through such books as *The Late Great Planet Earth*, Peretti's *This Present Darkness*, and the "Left Behind" series. Ironically, many American evangelicals today believe that premillennial dispensationalism is what the Bible teaches!¹⁸

Premillennial dispensationalism undermines creation care by locating the renewal of creation exclusively after the return of Jesus Christ. The present world is headed for inevitable destruction and any concern with saving it is a distraction from rescuing souls before Jesus returns. A striking example of this view is Frank Peretti's novel *This Present Darkness*, where it turns out that anyone concerned with social justice or creation care is in league with the devil.

With premillennial dispensationalism, the belief that the earth and all the material creation is going to be destroyed has come into vogue. If destruction is sure and imminent, it is pointless to be concerned about creation care. This view is based on the King James Version of 2 Peter 3:10: "But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up." The NRSV translates, "the heavens will pass away with a loud noise, and the elements will be dissolved with fire, and the earth and everything that is done on it will be disclosed."

Interpreting this passage in the context of the whole of Scripture, we should understand the heat and fire here in terms of refining, revealing, and cleansing, not of destruction or annihilation. "Creation will be cleansed and transformed, yet this new creation will stand in continuity with the old" (Field:6). Calvin commented, "[H]eaven and earth will be cleansed by fire so that they may be fit for the kingdom of Christ" (Commentary on 1 Peter 3:10). Wesley wrote, "Destruction is not deliverance; whatsoever is destroyed, or ceases to be, is not delivered at all," and in fact no "part of the creation" will be destroyed (Wesley, *ENNT*, on Rom. 8:21). God is not in the destroying business; he is in the refining, recycling, and recreating business.

The pattern here is Jesus' own death and resurrection. As Jesus died, the created order will be judged and refined. As Jesus rose again, the created order will be transformed through the power of Jesus' resurrection by the Spirit. We don't understand the mystery (1 Cor. 15:50–51), but we trust in new creation after the pattern of what happened to Jesus.

Many contemporary Christians fail to see 2 Peter 3:10 in light of the

broader sweep of Scripture and so misunderstand both the meaning of new creation and its present ethical and missional implications.

In sum, these seven factors combine to undermine evangelical concern for the environment. They make it difficult for Christians to understand and *feel* their responsibility for creation care. Combined, these developments have produced a narrowing of the full biblical meaning of salvation and of the cross of Jesus Christ. The cross has come to mean individual salvation to eternal life in the next world rather than the restoring of a fallen creation. The theological agenda for creation care certainly must include affirming the biblical doctrine of creation and exploring the meaning of Jesus' death and resurrection for the healing and restoration of God's own created order.

The Groaning of Creation

"We know that the whole creation has been groaning in labor pains until now" (Rom. 8:22). All creation groans, but like a woman in labor the whole "creation waits in eager expectation" for the full revelation of God's redemption and liberation. "For the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the glorious freedom of the children of God" (Rom. 8:19–21 NIV).

This we know, the Bible tells us: Creation is groaning in its bondage to decay, but waiting—waiting—waiting in *eager, hopeful anticipation* for God's salvation to be fully accomplished.

How is all creation groaning in bondage to decay? Clearly this picture is not what we find in Genesis 1 and 2. The Fall has intervened. In ways the Bible does not fully explain, the whole created order now suffers the consequences of human sin. "Cursed is the ground because of you," God tells Adam, meaning not that the earth itself is cursed or evil or under a malediction from God, but that it suffers the consequences of human sin. As Wesley says, "The ground or earth, by the sin of man, is made subject to vanity, the several parts of it being not so serviceable to [our] comfort and happiness as they were when they were made" (Wesley, *ENOT*). "From a biblical perspective, ecological brokenness is rooted in human sin. Creation groans in travail (Rom 8:22) because of the disobedience of the human steward of creation" (Walsh and Keesmaat 2004:195).

The earth is in bondage but its deliverance is sure. Creation's "bondage to decay" is well documented today. The created order is subject to entropy, the second law of thermodynamics. It is running down; moving from order to disorder, and Scripture seems to teach that this is the consequence of the Fall, of human sin.⁹

The groaning of creation is ever more audible today. Four of the most

important evidences are climate change, the increasing threat to ocean currents, deforestation, and species depletion. Many other ecological issues confront us, but these are key ones that deserve our attention.¹⁰

Climate Change and Global Warming

The most pressing large-scale threat to the earth today is human-induced climate change.

As long ago as 1896 the Swedish chemist Svante Arrhenius worried that increased burning of coal, oil, and firewood was adding millions of tons of carbon dioxide to the atmosphere. "We are evaporating our coal mines into the air," he wrote. The result would be "a change in the transparency of the atmosphere" that could heat the planet to intolerable levels. Discovery of global warming in the late 1970s showed that Arrhenius likely was on the right track (Snyder 1995:79).

Major UN scientific studies project a dramatic rise in global temperatures over the next century unless humans stop pumping greenhouse gases into the air. A 1990 study by 250 leading climatologists predicted a rise in earth's average temperature of about one degree Celsius by 2025 and three degrees before the end of the twenty-first century. That would be the fastest increase in history. It appears that earth has a fever. Such temperature increases would raise sea levels about half a foot by 2030 and three times that by the end of the century. A rise of only five degrees Celsius (nine degrees Fahrenheit) is believed to have triggered Earth's last ice age (Snyder 1995:79).

Debates about global warming continue among politicians, the oil industry, and conservative Christians, but not among reputable climatologists and oceanographers. Kevin Trenberth, head of the climate-analysis section at the National Center for Atmospheric Research in Boulder, Colorado, says, "There is no doubt that climate is changing and humans are partly responsible." As a result, "The odds have changed in favor of more intense storms and heavier rainfalls" (*Time*, 10/3/05, 43). In August of 2004, a full year before Hurricane Katrina, *Business Week* magazine ran a cover story, "Global Warming: Why Business Is Taking It So Seriously." The *Business Week* article quoted Republican Senator John McCain: "The facts are there. We have to educate our fellow citizens about climate change and the danger it poses to the world." Senator McCain co-sponsored the McCain-Lieberman climate-protection bill in Congress, which Christians should support. Carnegie Institution ecologist Christopher Field notes, "It's increasingly clear that even the modest warming today is having large effects on ecosystems. The most compelling impact is the 10% decreasing yield of corn in the [U.S.] Midwest per degree" of warming. Now a number of more far-seeing companies are beginning to seriously

invest in cleaner, more ecologically friendly sources of energy—absolutely necessary since the burning of fossil fuels is the major human source of global warming (*Business Week*, 8/16/04, 60–69). BP (formerly British Petroleum), for example, has run ads explaining the steps it is taking to counter global warming.

When you hear of global warming, don't think first of all of politics or economics, however. Think first of the groaning of creation.

The Great Ocean Conveyor

In recent years scientists have confirmed the existence of the so-called Great Ocean Conveyor Belt, the worldwide circulation of warmer and cooler ocean currents that is a major cause of earth's moderate climate. (Type "ocean conveyor" into an Internet search and in twenty seconds you'll have abundant sources on this.)

The Great Ocean Conveyor is affected by the rate of the melting of the Arctic ice mass, so global warming is a major issue. With excess melting, "the conveyor belt will weaken or even shut down," oceanographers say, producing disastrous global climate change (United Nations Environment Programme 2005). In that case, as *Business Week* notes, "Europe and the Northeastern U.S. would be far colder. . . . This isn't science fiction: The conveyor has shut down in the past with dramatic results" (*Business Week*, 8/16/04, 68).

This is the science that lies behind the melodramatic movie, *The Day After Tomorrow*. Though the movie was overdone and the timeline unrealistically compressed, the science behind it is real.

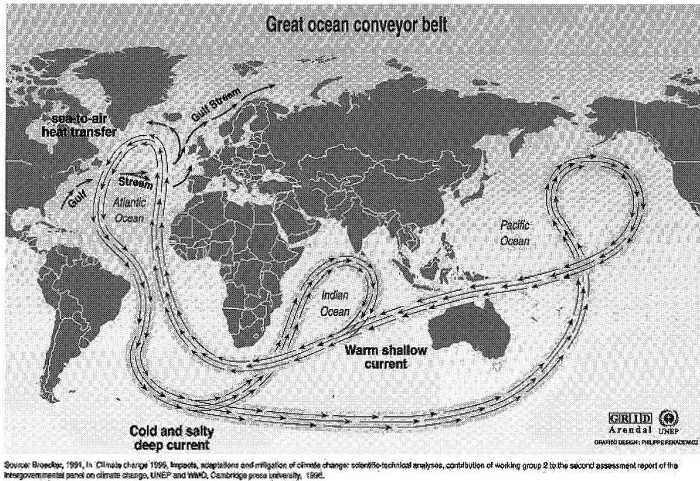
The Great Ocean Conveyor is the oceanic parallel to the earth's atmospheric circulation (to which it is of course ecologically linked). It is a life-giving flow, literally. But the burning of fossil fuels in our cars, SUVs, power plants, and military vehicles threatens it. The conveyor belt itself represents more the "breathing" than the groaning of creation but it is part of the larger picture of earth's ecology. It is a reminder both of the wonder and the vulnerability of God's good creation, and of the need for responsible creation care.

Deforestation

Although deforestation gets much less media attention, it is a major contributor to famine, poverty, and migration. Haiti is an outstanding example. It is doubly an ethical issue—both a matter of responsible creation care and of compassion for the poor.

As Klaus Nürnberger notes, deforestation feeds a cycle of death.

Population growth leads to an increased impact on nature: forests are chopped down, grazing is overstocked, agricultural lands are over-utilised, footpaths change into gullies, soil erosion



takes away the topsoil, and water is polluted. The deterioration of the natural resource base again increases misery, thus leading to further population growth, further pressure against the system, greater security needs of the system, greater impact on nature, and so forth [in] a vicious circle, or rather a vicious network (Nürnberger 1999:29).

Deforestation, combined with desertification and related factors, lead “to the large scale migration of ‘ecological refugees’ in search of grazing, agricultural land or urban sources of income” (Nürnberger 1999:88).

These ecological and social impacts of deforestation are hugely aggravated by large-scale destruction of forests by transnational corporations that is increasingly part of the globalized economy. The forests of poorer nations are being ravaged in order to fuel the world’s economic growth.

This is why planting trees is an important act of creation care. Reforestation, not only one-by-one but on large scales that deal with the political and social realities involved, is a key way to attend to creation’s groaning.

Species Depletion

God has filled the earth with an amazing variety of creatures and seems to delight in the creaturely profusion he has made. “God created the great sea monsters and every living creature that moves, of every kind, with which the waters swarm, and every winged bird of every kind. And God saw that it was good” (Gen. 1:21). “God made the wild animals of the earth of every kind, and the cattle of every kind, and everything that creeps

upon the ground of every kind. And God saw that it was good” (Gen. 1:25). “O Lord, how manifold are your works! In wisdom you have made them all; the earth is full of your creatures” (Ps. 104:24). Later when God mandated the ark he told Noah, “Of every living thing, of all flesh, you shall bring two of every kind into the ark, to keep them alive with you; they shall be male and female” (Gen. 6:19). God has established an everlasting covenant with the earth (Gen. 9:13). Specifically this is a covenant, God says to Noah, “between me and you and every living creature . . . , for all future generations” (Gen. 9:12). This covenant God has never revoked, and we are to fulfill our stewardship role in this three-way covenant.

God delights in his creatures and wills their protection as part of the well-being of all creation. This is one reason many Christians have supported the Endangered Species Act, passed two decades ago by the U.S. Congress with bipartisan and Administration support.

The Genesis 9 covenant values all living things and “places them just as squarely under God’s direct provision and protection” as are human beings. As Fred Van Dyke, *et al.*, put it,

What is the fate of those who set out by design, by ignorance or by selfishness to destroy what God has pledged himself to protect? What will be the outcome of having been on the wrong side of God on an issue of covenant preservation, the fate of the world’s endangered species? It is on the basis of God’s covenant protection of his creation, consistent with the value he has already imparted to it and with his determination to redeem it, that we believe it matters very much. (1996:77)

Species depletion may seem a remote concern because we don’t see how it affects us directly. In fact, it does affect human well-being in multiple ways. Declining or dying species can be the first signs of environmental changes that threaten human life. Still undiscovered plant and animal species may provide cures to deadly human diseases. Genetic diversity is a key to planetary well-being. In the long run therefore genetic depletion probably represents as great a threat to humankind as does global warming.

But these are human-centered arguments. From a biblical standpoint, the reason to preserve earth’s creatures is that they belong to God, not to us. Life forms are not to be destroyed, abused, or patented. Whether we fully understand this or not, they exist for God’s glory and pleasure first of all, and only secondarily for our benefit. Kingdom Christians support the protection of endangered species as part of their service to God as well as for the sake of human flourishing.

These four issues are representative of a whole world (literally) of

creation issues that fall within the circle of creation and the healing of creation. All these issues interlock; they all fit together ecologically. Biblically speaking, they are all part of God's ecology and economy; of God's *oikos* and *oikonomia*.

Creation is groaning because of human sin—not only the sin of Adam and Eve but the ongoing sins of the unfaithfulness of God's covenant people, right up to today. Would-be Jesus-followers either increase the groaning, further burdening the earth, or we respond to the groaning, acting *now* on the basis of, and in the assurance of, the hope of all creation healed through Jesus Christ in the power of the Spirit.

Creation Healed Through Jesus Christ by the Spirit

God is in Christ reconciling the world to himself in the power of the Holy Spirit. How are we to understand this in the light of biblical teachings on creation and new creation and in light of the present groaning of creation? Let us now revisit the gospel story.

The Disease and the Cure

In the biblical picture, the redemption of human beings plays the central role in a story of transformation that begins with “substantial healing” (as Francis Schaeffer called it) now and leads to total restoration, a new heaven and earth, when God's kingdom comes in fullness.

God created man and woman in healthful harmony with himself, with each other, and with the created world. They were at peace (*shalom*) with God, with themselves and each other, and with the plants and animals God had made. In the garden “the man and his wife were not only not ashamed to be naked; they also were not uncomfortable” (Van Dyke, *et al.*: 90). As Sandy Richter writes, “This was the ideal plan for a world in which [humanity] would succeed in constructing the human civilization by directing and harnessing the amazing resources of the planet under the wise direction of their Creator. Here there would always be enough, progress would not necessitate pollution, expansion would not demand extinction” (Richter 2004).

Sin, however, brought disruption in a fourfold sense. As Francis Schaeffer pointed out years ago, human disobedience brought alienation between humans and God and as a result an internal alienation within each person (alienation from oneself), alienation between humans, and alienation from nature (Schaeffer 1970:66–68). These are the spiritual, psychological, sociocultural, and ecological alienations that afflict the whole human family. All derive from sin, and all distort God's good purpose in creation. Therefore they are all concerns of the gospel of reconciliation which help clarify the church's mission agenda. *Faithful Christian mission focuses on healing the four alienations or divisions that have resulted from the fall.* This means that

working for reconciliation between humans and the created order is an indispensable element in Christian mission. It is part of the gospel, an essential part of the Good News which Christians offer to the world.

God brings salvation through the work of Jesus Christ — his incarnation, life, death, resurrection, and ongoing reign. Jesus' redemptive work is pictured in broadest scope in John 1, Hebrews 1, Colossians 1, Ephesians 1 and similar passages. These texts are fundamental to a biblical understanding of mission as transformation. Ephesians 2:8–9 states, “For by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not your own doing, it is the gift of God—not the result of works, so that no one may boast.” This truth comes as an elaboration of what Paul wrote in Ephesians 1:10, which proclaims God’s “plan [*oikonomia*] for the fullness of time to gather up [literally, to join together under one head] all thing in [Jesus Christ], things in heaven and things on earth.” This is God’s “economy” (the literal translation of *oikonomia* and a key term in Pauline and early Christian theology. See Prestige 1952). It is God’s “plan” or “administration” that he is accomplishing through Jesus Christ.¹¹

The plan of salvation as pictured in texts such as Ephesians 1, Colossians 1, and Hebrews 1 is this: *that God may glorify himself by reconciling all things in Christ*. The biblical vision is of all earth’s peoples, and in fact of all creation, united in praising and serving God (Ps. 67:3–5; Rev. 7:9–12; 19:6).

The key idea and dynamic here is *reconciliation*. God’s plan is for the restoration of his creation—for overcoming, in judgment and glorious fulfillment, the damage done to persons and nature through the fall. This plan includes not only the reconciliation of people to God, but the reconciliation of “all things in heaven and on earth.” As Paul puts it in Colossians 1:20, it is God’s intention through Christ “to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross.” Jesus Christ brings peace, not only in the sense of forgiveness of sins but in the full biblical sense of *shalom*.

Central to this plan is the reconciliation of persons to God through the blood of Jesus Christ. But the reconciliation won by Christ reaches to all the alienations that resulted from our sin—within ourselves, between persons, between us and our physical environment. The biblical picture therefore is at once personal, ecological, and cosmic. As mind-boggling as the thought is, Scripture teaches that this reconciliation even includes the redemption of the physical universe from the effects of sin as everything is brought under its proper headship in Jesus (Rom. 8:19–21).

In all these passages, Paul begins with the fact of individual and corporate personal salvation through Christ. But he places this personal salvation within a picture of cosmic transformation. We see that the redemption of persons is the *center* of God’s plan, but it is not *the circumference*

of that plan. Paul switches from a close-up shot to a long-distance view. He uses a zoom lens, for the most part taking a close-up of personal redemption, but periodically pulling back to a long-distance, wide-angle view which takes in “all things” — things visible and invisible; things past, present and future; things in heaven and things on earth; all the principalities and powers — everything in the cosmic-historical scene. To God be the glory in heaven and on earth!

Although this comprehensive picture of salvation is most fully elaborated in Paul’s writings, it is also the larger biblical view. All the promises of cosmic restoration in the Old Testament apply here, reaching their climax in Isaiah’s sublime vision (Is. 11:6–9; 35:1–10; 65:17–25). The basic message of the book of Revelation is the harmonious uniting of all things under the lordship of Christ as all evil, all discord is destroyed (Rev. 1:5–7; 5:5–10; 11:15; 21:1–22:5). In a somewhat different context, this same “summing up” perspective is evident in Hebrews 1–2. Jesus’ parables of the kingdom also point in this direction. And Isaiah, Peter and John speak of God creating a new heaven and a new earth (Is. 65:17; 66:22; 2 Pet. 3:13; Rev. 21:1).

The testimony of Scripture is consistent: The same God who created the universe perfect, and sustains it in its fallen condition (Heb. 1:3), will restore all things through the work of Jesus Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit.

Christians know, therefore, that the gospel of Jesus Christ offers the essential necessary resources for facing all earth’s problems, including issues of ecology and the environment. Here the bold claim of Scripture that in Jesus Christ all things cohere (Col. 1:17) takes on deeper and broader meaning. As Charles Colson writes, “Every part of creation came from God’s hand, every part was drawn into the mutiny of humanity against God, and every part will someday be redeemed. This means caring about all of life—redeeming people and redeeming culture” (Colson 2004) — yes, and in fact all creation.

According to the gospel, the decisive act in history was the resurrection of Jesus Christ. This was the key triumph over death and despair, the reversal of discord and incoherence. Jesus’ resurrection *in fact* makes everything new.

And yet the battle continues. There will yet be many casualties. But we are energized by the assurance that the one who won the decisive victory over evil in his resurrection at a particular point in history will bring the story to final, glorious fulfillment. The goal of history is final harmony and reconciliation, justice and moral symmetry — the ultimate triumph of justice, mercy, and truth. The Apostle Peter called it “the time of universal restoration” (Acts 3:21).

Predation and Atonement

In his earthly ministry Jesus freed some people from the physical and demonic predation of sin and showed his power over the forces of nature — most notably in his sign miracles and in calming the sea. Yet in his life and in his cross he submitted to sin's predatory powers — then decisively triumphed over them in his resurrection. His victory inaugurates the new creation *now*, in the Spirit's power, but only in God's way. Thus we wait for — but also live in — the new creation in expectant hope that “the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to decay and will obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God.”

Thus the new creation through Jesus' death and resurrection means the end of death and predation. “The last enemy to be destroyed is death” (1 Cor. 15:26).

The prism of creation's groaning clarifies the true nature of sin — more and more so, in fact, as we come to understand the pain and stress the creation suffers today because of accumulated human sin and its ecological effects.

In some sense, all sin is predation. Perhaps predation in fact goes to the heart of sin. At least in terms of its behavioral manifestations, all sin is predatory. It is the willingness of God-imaged persons (and the proclivity of all God's creatures) to sacrifice the life of another for their own (perceived) benefit.

In this sense, the essence of sin may not be pride so much as it is the desire and willingness to exalt oneself, or prefer oneself, over another. Humans practice predation on each other and on many of God's creatures — on the earth itself. Foolishly (for sin blinds), humans even try to practice predation on God, using God for selfish ends.

The Bible explicitly teaches that God's purpose is to put an end to *all* predation. “The wolf shall live with the lamb, the leopard shall lie down with the kid, the calf and the lion and the fatling together, and a little child shall lead them. . . . They will not hurt or destroy on all my holy mountain” (Isa. 11:6, 9). If the created order will indeed be “liberated from its bondage to decay” then this promise in Isaiah is not metaphor or allegory; it is a description of the new creation; the promise of deliverance from earth's bondage to decay and predation — and a signpost for how we are to live today.

The predatory nature of sin illuminates Christ's atoning sacrifice for us. God's offering up of his own son in Jesus' death could look like predation (some have called it “divine child abuse”). But what turns this argument on its head is that Jesus offered himself freely, and that Jesus' death and resurrection is a trinitarian drama. God gave himself, refusing to follow the world's and Satan's way of predation. This was the only way to break

the cycle and disorder of predation and set humanity and human history on the right course, the divine course of self-giving and loving concern for the other.

Jesus Christ died for our sins and rose in the power of the Holy Spirit. He is the firstfruits of the new creation, and by the Spirit we already with Christ become the firstfruits of the new creation (1 Cor. 15:20, Rom. 8:23, Jas. 1:8, Rev. 14:4). Jesus' resurrection brings healing and deliverance to both the human and the nonhuman creation. Presumably Jesus would not have died for the non-human creation if it had not been the home of his specially-imaged human creation.¹² So helping people come to transforming faith in Jesus Christ is always a central focus of Christian mission. But this is not an either/or, for God wills, now as always, to save his people *and* his land and bring heaven to earth (Rev. 21:1–2) — not to take disembodied souls to a nonmaterial heaven; that view would be gnosticism, not biblical Christianity.

Jesus' atonement through his death and triumphant resurrection is a cosmic-historical act through which all creation is redeemed — potentially and partially now, and fully when the kingdom comes in fullness. Frank Macchia writes, "Justification is a trinitarian act of cosmic proportions that is based in the Father as the one who creates and elects, in the Son as Redeemer, and in the Spirit as the giver of life." It is "the Holy Spirit's work to bring about justice through new creation." A fully trinitarian understanding of God's work in Jesus Christ, Macchia suggests,

would not confine the Spirit's role to the subjective or even interpersonal dimensions of the life of faith. The Spirit's involvement as advocate and intercessor for creation is implied in the Spirit's groaning in and through us for the suffering creation (Rom 8:26). The divine will and judgment to justify and redeem may be seen as a response to an advocate and an intercessor already present in all of creation. [Think *prevenient grace*!] If the "Father's" will to justify is expressed in the divine will to send the Son, and the Son's will is expressed in the willingness to be sent, the Spirit's will would therefore be in the cry from creation to receive the gift that will be sent and in the cooperation with the Son in the shaping of the christological answer (Macchia 2001:214–15, 217).

God the Trinity wills to heal all creation. The biblical promise is that radical, awesome, and hope-inspiring. New creation in Jesus Christ by the Spirit creates the firstfruits-community that *lives now* the new-creation life in the fullness of biblical "all things" hope (Rom. 8:28, 32; 11:36; Eph. 1:10; Col. 1:16–20).

Cycles of Life and Cycles of Death

Human history is linear but also operates in the rhythms and cycles of nature. History is the mixture of cycles of life and cycles of death (violence, decay, entropy) over time. Through the resurrection and Pentecost, God's Spirit gives the church the power to live in and advance cycles of life and hope and to ameliorate the cycles of death while we wait expectantly for final liberation, new creation in its fullness.

One thing I've learned from running regularly is that cycles can work either for you or against you. If I've put on extra weight from overeating, I tend to run a bit slower. But if I push against that and run faster, I tend to lose some weight. The more I run, the more fit I feel, and the more fit I feel the better I run. When I run regularly I tend to lose weight; when I gain weight, I run slower.

Now, this is an illustration only; many people aren't physically able to run. But the principle holds. We live by cycles that can work either for us or against us.

We know the same principle works spiritually. The more we exercise ourselves spiritually (in biblically sound ways) the more we grow spiritually, and the more we grow spiritually, the more disciplined we tend to be.

The same principle holds with the physical creation and the way we treat it. Humans have dominion over the earth — either constructively or destructively. Cycles of life and cycles of death interact and compete within the created order. The cycles of death have been introduced by sin, including the human sin of neglecting biblical stewardship or creation care. Cycles of life (including Sabbath, worship, and Jubilee) are God's way. They are living cycles of life in our ongoing discipleship on earth. Empowered by the Spirit and Christian community, these cycles of life are not just for our own spirituality. They *actually contribute* to the coming of the new creation in fullness. In our discipleship, we can learn to live by the rhythms of nature and the spirit, not just the cycles of the workday, CNN, or "Law and Order."

This is the deeper reason, for instance, why recycling makes sense. Recycling works *against* cycles of death and *with* cycles of life. Van Dyke, *et al.*, write,

We extend a Christian response to God's creation when we begin to use less and save more. Those who recycle their own bottles and cans live with integrity. Those who persuade the city council to make recycling part of the normal garbage-collection procedure have changed their world. The reason to recycle materials or to compost leaves goes beyond compliance with local ordinances. It is within compliance of greater ordinances,

cycles that God created for the world in which we live (145).

Cycles of life and death are physically, materially, economically true for the created order just as much as they for our bodies and spirits.

Living in New Creation Expectancy

“The creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the children of God. . . . and not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly while we wait for adoption, the redemption of our bodies” (Rom 8:19, 23).

Waiting in eager expectation. Living in new creation expectancy. Groaning now — the whole creation, and we ourselves — but not without hope. Rather it is a “groaning in labor pains” (Rom. 8:22), confident that present groaning will lead to the new creation.

Here is hope, expectancy, optimism of grace, the grace of optimism. A hope based not on human intelligence or technology or ingenuity but on Jesus’ resurrection, God’s promise, and the present work of the Spirit in the world and in the church.

This God-breathed expectant hope is what inspires our evangelism, discipleship, and creation care. We seek to honor God in God’s world. We seek the healing, spiritual and physical, of all people and all creation. “You cannot have well people on a sick planet,” says Thomas Berry. Someone else has commented, “If you love Rembrandt, you won’t trash his paintings.”

Scripture presents a richly textured, comprehensive, and profound biblical mandate for honoring God through caring for his handiwork. Biblically, this is part of the Good News of salvation in Jesus Christ, not a secondary add-on.

Creation Care Is Holistic Mission

At least half a dozen biblical themes ground the mandate for creation care. The Bible plan of salvation is one of peace, *shalom*, which in the Bible is a highly ecological concept that highlights the interdependence between people and their social and physical context. The biblical theology of land, from the Old Testament to the New, “grounds” (literally) salvation in God’s plan for the whole earth. The theme of the earth as God’s habitation implies human respect for and care of nature. The key biblical theme of justice and righteousness—the principal basis for a kingdom of God ethic—rules out harmful exploitation not only of people but of the land. The incarnation and servanthood of Jesus Christ show us what it means to live righteous and godly lives physically, on earth. The biblical doctrine of the Holy Spirit and of the church as charismatic underscores the role of the Spirit in both creation and the renewal of creation (e.g., Ps. 104:30). Finally, the doctrine of the Trinity itself is rich in ecological insights, as it implies mutual

interdependence and self-giving in behalf of the other rather than self-centered dominance or exploitation. The created order is the way it is because of the way God is. Its unity and diversity reflect in some sense the diversity-within-unity that is the Trinity.

Creation care, then, is grounded in God's character, in Scripture from the beginning, and in the Good News we proclaim. Everything in the gospel, in the kingdom, becomes clearer once we see it in through the lens of creation and the promised new creation. These comprehensive considerations suggest five very good reasons for creation care today:

1. *Creation care for God's sake.* "The heavens are telling the glory of God, and the firmament proclaims his handiwork" (Ps. 19:1). God created the universe to glorify himself and to assist his human creation in praising him. We are to praise God through, and also because of, his beautiful but complex world.

The primary reason for faithful creation care, therefore, is that caring for God's world is a fundamental way of glorifying God. We glorify him by the proper stewardship of the world he has made. We should care for the environment for God's sake.

Scripture affirms that "whether [we] eat or drink, or whatever [we] do," we should "do everything for the glory of God" (1 Cor. 10:31). God is glorified when we see him in the created order, and when we take care of the world he has made. Creation care is part of our acceptable worship (Rom. 12:1).

One of the main lessons Job had to learn was that the created order testifies to the vast wisdom of God and therefore is a motive for praising him. "Hear this, O Job; stop and consider the wondrous works of God" (Job 37:14). We see God in his works, and lift our eyes from nature to nature's God — but *then look back again* at nature with new eyes, seeing the garden we are to tend. Fulfilling God-given stewardship through the God-like powers that have been given us for good, not for evil, we glorify the Creator.

As McGrath and others have documented, there is a long Christian tradition not only of seeing God in nature but also of the human responsibility that this vision implies. "Something of the torrent of God's beauty can . . . be known in the rivulets of the beauty of creation. This has long been recognised as one of the most basic religious motivations for scientific research," McGrath notes, and should stir our passion for creation care, as well. Thomas Aquinas wrote, "Meditation on God's works enables us, at least to some extent, to admire and reflect on God's wisdom" (McGrath 2002:16). Thomas Traherne (c. 1637–1674) said creation "is a glorious mirror wherein you may see the verity of all religion: enjoy the remainders of Paradise, and talk with the Deity. Apply yourself vigorously

to the enjoyment of it, for in it you shall see the face of God, and by enjoying it, be wholly converted to Him” (Traherne 1960: 63). And the God who is seen and glorified in the created order is honored and served through creation care.

John Wesley is a good representative of what might be called the great tradition of Christian appreciation of the created order and the responsibility that implies. “How small a part of this great work of God [in creation] is man able to understand!” he wrote. “But it is our duty to contemplate what he has wrought, and to understand as much of it as we are able” (Sermon 56, “God’s Approbation of His Works,” 2). Wesley argued that such contemplation is a theological, not just a devotional, exercise. In preaching from the Sermon on the Mount he affirmed,

God is in all things, and . . . we are to see the Creator in the glass of every creature; . . . we should use and look upon nothing as separate from God, which indeed is a kind of practical atheism; but with a true magnificence of thought survey heaven and earth and all that is therein as contained by God in the hollow of his hand, who by his intimate presence holds them all in being, who pervades and actuates the whole created frame, and is in a true sense the soul of the universe. (Sermon 23, “Upon our Lord’s Sermon on the Mount, Discourse III,” I.11)

Wesley emphasized that the created order shows us God’s wisdom, glory, and beauty, leading us to praise him and live responsibly before him in the world. Creation is the God-given “book of nature.” It is in the light of this book of nature that we interpret the Scriptures, and vice versa. It is in the light of God’s care for his creatures that we learn about our own stewardship.

Caring for and protecting the world God has made is part of our worship and service. We care for creation for God’s sake.

2. *Creation care for our own sake* — for human well-being. We should care for creation as if our life depended on it — because it does.

We often forget how dependent we are upon the physical environment — “a few hundred yards of atmosphere and a few inches of topsoil,” as someone has said. We are largely unaware of our actual dependence, though from time to time hurricanes, tornadoes, earthquakes, or volcanic eruptions remind us of our vulnerability. Sometimes the popular media talks of “Mother Nature going on a rampage.”

But we are no less vulnerable when the sun is shining, flowers are blooming, and birds are singing. We are just less aware. Here environmental science helps us, and we need to pay attention to what it teaches.

If we are passionate about people, we will be passionate about their

environment. Christians have often been concerned with feeding the hungry and providing shelter for the homeless. This Christ-like human concern should expand to include the environmental conditions that enable food production and the well-being of the planet that is our home. In many places, people lack food and shelter because the forests have been destroyed or the water supply has disappeared. These ecological issues cannot be handled simply by relief work; they require careful, informed, sustained creation care.

Scripture is the story of God's people serving God in God's land. If God's people are faithful, the land prospers. Conversely, if the land suffers, we suffer. This is a repeated theme in much of Old Testament literature—in the law, the prophets, and the wisdom literature. It comes to particular focus in the Jubilee legislation of Leviticus 25–26.

The key fact is ecological interdependence. If we care about people, we will care for the land and air and multiplied species on which our well-being depends.

3. *Creation care for creation's sake.* We should care for the created order because it has its own God-given right to exist and flourish, independently of its relationship to us. The world after all is *God's* handiwork, not ours. God created the universe for his good purposes, *not all of which are yet known to us*. We need, therefore, a certain eschatological humility and reserve. We are to honor God's creative work and to fulfill our responsibilities as stewards of what he has made.

In great measure, God's other creatures depend on us for their well-being and survival. Increasingly, in fact, we see that the whole biosphere is more dependent on human nurture and care than we would have imagined. We need to recover the biblical sense of why creation exists, how it proclaims God's glory, and of how all nature will participate in God's salvation. John Wesley had a profound sense of this. One of his favorite phrases was "the restitution of all things," the King James Version of Acts 3:21. In that passage the Apostle Peter tells us that the time is coming when God will "restore everything, as he promised long ago through his holy prophets." And so Wesley wrote,

While "the whole creation groans together" (whether men attend or not), their groans are not dispersed in idle air, but enter into the ears of him that made them. While his creatures "travail together in pain," he knows all their pain, and is bringing them nearer and nearer to the birth which shall be accomplished in its season. He sees "the earnest expectation" wherewith the whole animated creation "waits for" that final "manifestation of the sons of God": in which "they themselves also shall be delivered" (not by annihilation: annihilation is not deliverance) "from the" present "bondage of corruption, into" a measure of "the glorious liberty of the

children of God.”

Referring then to Revelation 21, Wesley notes that the promise of the destruction of death, evil, and pain is not restricted to humankind. Rather, we may expect that “the whole brute creation will then undoubtedly be restored, not only to the vigor, strength, and swiftness which they had at their creation, but to a far higher degree of each than they ever enjoyed.” Then will be fulfilled the great promise of Isaiah 11:6–9 (Sermon 60, “The General Deliverance”).

Since all God’s creatures reflect God’s glory and have a place in God’s plan, they are part of legitimate Christian concern. If God cares for and about the creatures, so should we.

4. *Creation care for the sake of mission.* Another *major* reason Jesus-followers should be passionate about creation care is that this is essential for effective mission in today’s world.

The biblical doctrine of creation assures us that holistic mission necessarily includes the church’s mission to and in behalf of the earth. The biblical vision has always been God’s people serving God’s purposes in God’s land.

The argument here is both theological and strategic. Theological, because a fully biblical view of mission will necessarily include the dimension of creation care. But also strategic and pragmatic, because a holistic theology and practice of mission that incorporates creation care is much more persuasive. Do we want people of all nations and cultures to come to faith in Jesus Christ as the Savior of the world? Then we should proclaim and demonstrate that Jesus is the renewer of the whole creation, the whole face of the earth. Salvation is that big. This is a grander portrayal of Christ than we sometimes present. It both honors our Savior and makes the gospel more persuasive and attractive when we present a gospel of total healing—the healing of creation; the restoration of all things. This is truly the whole gospel for the whole world.

5. *Creation care for the sake of our children and grandchildren.* There is a final persuasive motive for creation care today: For the sake of our children and grandchildren. For our descendants yet unborn. As Scripture teaches, we have a responsibility—a stewardship—in behalf of the generations yet to come.

Today we look back at the Protestants of the 16th and 17th centuries and ask, Why did they not have a sense of the Christian global missionary mandate? Or we look back at Christian slaveholders in the eighteenth and nineteenth century and ask, How could they not see that slavery was incompatible with the gospel? What did they think they were doing?²³

Our grandchildren, as they wrestle with ecological issues, will look back on this generation and ask: Why could they not see the Christian

responsibility for earth stewardship? Why did they wait so long? What did they think they were doing when they failed to defend the forests and the seas and to protect earth's endangered species? Did they not understand what they were doing to their own descendants?

We today are the generation that must rediscover and proclaim creation care as part of the gospel, part of the mission of God.

We hope that our children and grandchildren will know and serve Jesus Christ, and we hope also that they will inherit a world that is not choked and poisoned by pollution or made scarcely habitable by environmental disasters. If that is our hope, the time for action is now. We should treat future generations the way we would want to be treated.

Practical Principles

The Bible is rich in its teachings about the created order. It gives us not only the big picture of transformation but also practical principles by which this stewardship can be carried out as a part of Christian mission. Calvin DeWitt (1995:838–48) helpfully outlines four principles that are rooted in Scripture and are highly relevant for the practice of creation care and ecologically sensitive Christian mission globally:

1. *The Earthkeeping Principle*: Just as the creator keeps and sustains humanity, so humanity must keep and sustain the creator's creation.

2. *The Sabbath Principle*: The creation must be allowed to recover from human use of its resources. Sabbath cycles become cycles of life, counteracting cycles of death.

3. *The Fruitfulness Principle*: The fecundity of the creation is to be enjoyed, not destroyed.

4. *The Fulfillment and Limits Principle*: There are limits set to humanity's role within creation, with boundaries set in place that must be respected.

When such principles are integrated into our discipleship and our global mission practice, we will see the healing power of the gospel as never before in history.

Redemptive Practices

How shall we live, then, honoring God in God's world? How do we put principles of simplicity, creation-sensitivity, and biblical stewardship into actual practice?

We will need to begin with repentance for covenant unfaithfulness, recognizing that violating God's covenant with the earth is sin. As "fruit worthy of repentance" (Mt. 3:8) we can adopt creation-care practices that reinforce cycles of life.

Here are several to consider. Not all of these will appeal to everyone, but we can each adopt some of these as part of Christian discipleship and an expression of the physicality of our spirituality.

1. *Bible study.* Study the Bible (personally and in groups) with creation-care eyes. Learn what the Bible teaches about the creation, earth, God's covenant with the earth (Gen. 9), and God's plan for creation restored. Key biblical themes worth studying are *earth, justice, land, shalom, the poor, the nations, Sabbath/Jubilee, and reconciliation.*

2. *Pray* (singly and in groups) for the healing of the land and the nations. We can pray for reforestation in Haiti; peace in places where war ravages the environment; God's sustenance for frontline earth healers—and for discernment: “Lord, what would you have me to do?” “We do not know how to pray as we ought, but [the Holy Spirit] intercedes for us with sighs too deep for words” (Rom. 8:26).

3. *Recycle* things rather than throwing them “away,” realizing that waste products never really “go away.” Support community-wide recycling efforts. Remember that it is about 90% cheaper and more ecologically responsible to make recycled pop cans than to make new ones. Recycling has an economic as well as ecological benefit. It is a way to slow down rather than speed up the entropy of the created order. (The city of Lexington, Kentucky, saves a million dollars annually by encouraging recycling.)

4. *Support local, state, and federal legislation and international agreements that protect the environment and promote creation care.* Strengthening the Endangered Species Act, supporting legislation such as the McCain-Lieberman Climate Change Bill, and working for international accords to limit “greenhouse” gases are good places to start. Locally we might work for bike lanes on city streets, for more parks and footpaths, and expanded recycling.

5. *Make Sundays (or another day) real Sabbaths* by spending at least an hour reading good books and articles on creation and on creation-care as a part of mission and discipleship. (See the bibliography below for suggestions.) Combine this with walks (alone or with friends) in fields and woods, paying attention to God's other creatures.

6. *Form a group* that focuses on the creation-care dimensions of mission and discipleship—prayer, study, conversation, action.

7. *Write a poem, hymn, song, or meditation* celebrating the greatness of God as seen in his creation. The books of Psalms and Job provide wonderful models. Or: Figure out the creation-care implications of your regular teaching or preaching.

8. *Form some creation-affirming habits*—moderate eating, regular exercise, walking (if possible) instead of riding or using elevators, bird-watching, nature photography, gardening—whatever best fits your own situation. Use personal disciplines and exercise for the benefit of creation and others, not just for your own health.

9. *Practice energy conservation*—for the sake of the planet and the poor, not just to save money—in home-building or renovation, transportation,

entertainment, and daily habits.

10. *Become active in an organization or network* that promotes the healing of creation from a biblical standpoint. The Evangelical Environmental Network is a good place to start and a source of information on various networks, resources, and programs. The book *Redeeming Creation* by Van Dyke, *et al.*, lists numerous Christian groups devoted to creation care in an appendix.

Conclusion

We have a great commission and a wonderful opportunity to make Jesus Christ known today—to proclaim the gospel of the kingdom; to declare God’s glory among the nations. We have a stewardship to fulfill—a stewardship of creation, and a stewardship of God’s many-colored grace (1 Pt. 4:10), which is our essential resource.¹⁴

The same God who is concerned with the renewal of the church is concerned with the renewal of creation. The same Spirit who hovers over the church hovers over the waters and wants to bring both into reconciliation under the headship of Jesus Christ. If we are concerned about mission in its truest sense, we will be concerned about every good thing God has made. Conversely, if we are genuinely concerned with God’s world, we will want to see the Holy Spirit renew God’s people, sending a revival of such depth that it not only stirs our hearts but also heals our land.

We want to see creation healed, and we are hopeful because God has promised it will be so. We especially want to see our brothers and sisters throughout the earth healed of the disease of sin, brought into new-creation life through Jesus Christ and the Spirit. We want to live and proclaim the good news of the kingdom of God so that more and more people worldwide keep covenant with God and with his good earth — in the assurance that “the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to decay” and “the earth will be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea.”

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Notes

1. All biblical quotations in this paper are from the NRSV unless otherwise indicated.
2. Man . . .
 Who trusted God was love indeed
 And love Creation's final law —
 Tho' Nature, red in tooth and claw
 With ravine, shrieked against his creed.
 —Alfred, Lord Tennyson, "In Memoriam A. H. H." (1850).
3. An irony of contemporary globalizing society is the marketing of the romantic; the commodification of culture itself; turning indigenous artistic and cultural expressions into products on the world market. Global capitalism has discovered that romanticism has commercial value as commodity. See Rifkin 2000.
4. This view, which gave rise to classical Christian theism, has been roundly critiqued by process theology and, from an evangelical perspective, the "open theism" of Clark Pinnock and others.
5. It is not of course the only reason. The economic prosperity of the United States, for example, is due not only to free enterprise and democracy but also to the suppression and exploitation of Native American peoples and cultures, slave labor, almost unbounded natural resources, a nearly constant flow of immigration, the legacy of European empire and colonialism, American military power and covert operations worldwide, government sponsorship and protection of business, unequal trade arrangements, and intellectual property laws. So one should be cautious about claiming that God has uniquely "blessed" America.
6. In conversations with Christian businessmen over the years I have been surprised how

infrequently *any* ethical issues are raised except ones of individual morality and perhaps the avoidance of “sin industries” like alcohol, tobacco, and pornography. Almost never is environmental exploitation raised as a moral issue, and those who raise it are generally dismissed as “tree huggers,” persons more concerned about spotted owls and snail darters than about people, who are what *really* matter.

7. Genuine Christian community of course affirms the importance of personhood. The biblical ideal is not to lose or submerge individuality in the collective but rather responsible mutual community in which Jesus-followers find their true personal identity, freedom, and responsibility. See “The Mind of Christ,” chapter 9 in Snyder 2005.

8. For a brief overview and sources, see Snyder 1991:123–26.

9. The Bible does not specify precisely in what ways the created order was affected by the Fall and the flood. Some would object to drawing any connection between the creation’s “bondage to decay” and the scientific “law” of entropy. There clearly is at least a link analogically, and perhaps even more directly. Clearly climate and weather were affected by the Fall and the flood, according to Genesis, and these may be symptomatic of larger physical changes introduced into the created order through human sin. On the significance of (and debates about) entropy see Nürnberger 1999:334–55. “Even social structures, cultures and convictions have a tendency to disintegrate” (336). The certainty of creation’s liberation and human ethical responsibility for creation care do not depend on the equation of entropy with creation’s “bondage to decay,” but it is empirically true that wasteful lifestyles speed up the process of entropy (deterioration). Entropy and gracious “extropy” are discussed in Snyder 1989.

10. *Creation Care* magazine, published by the Evangelical Environmental Network, regularly deals with a range of environmental issues. Its “Healthy Families, Healthy Environment” initiative is especially worthy of note.

11. The biblical meaning of “economy of God” is more fully elaborated in Snyder 1983, ch. 2.

12. Biblically speaking, we do not know this for sure.

13. The precedent of nineteenth-century abolitionism is instructive. The abolitionists advanced four arguments that have parallels in the current concern for creation care: (1) The Bible does not justify the practice of slavery today; (2) the issue is moral and spiritual, not just political or economic; (3) the only proper response therefore is repentance and the ending of slavery; (4) the primary theological issue has to do with creation—slaves are our fellow humans, created in the image of God. The abolitionist voice was a minority one in the 1830s and 1840s but now Christians widely accept the validity of their concern. Today we are in a similar place with regard to the stewardship of God’s good creation, which is now in bondage—a biblical concern, but in some places as controversial as was early abolitionism.

14. Biblically speaking, there are just two kinds of stewardship: Covenant care of the created order (including, obviously, time and money) and stewardship of God’s many-colored grace (1 Peter 4:10).

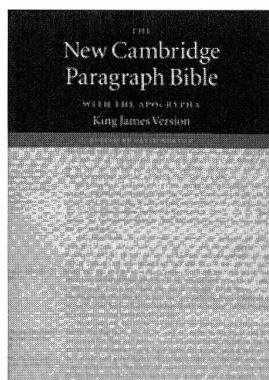
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Randy L. MADDOX

Anticipating the New Creation: Wesleyan Foundations for Holistic Mission

Abstract

This essay provides a brief orientation to the public debate over the last forty years about the implications of the Christian worldview for environmental concern. It then explores the mature writings of John Wesley (and some of Charles Wesley's hymns), seeking to highlight those convictions that emphasize God's care for the whole creation and that call upon us to participate in this care. These Wesleyan convictions are developed in direct dialogue with the most common charges leveled against the Christian worldview as unsupportive or even detrimental to environmental concern. The article also highlights how Wesley sharpened his commitment to those biblical themes most supportive of concern for the whole creation through his dialogue with the science of his day. The importance of this Wesleyan precedent for our own engagement with environmental issues is noted in some closing reflections.

KEYWORDS: environment, Wesleyan, creation, John Wesley

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The publication of *Silent Spring* by Rachel Carson in 1962¹ is broadly used to mark the awakening of public concern in the United States about the growing impact of human population growth and technology upon the earth's environment. Carson highlighted how this impact was threatening extinction of some species and posed a threat to the future survival of humanity. This warning bell was followed five years later by an essay on "The Historical Roots of Our Ecological Crisis"² that would prove almost as influential. In this essay Lynn White Jr. argued that a major contributor to the high rate of detrimental impact upon the environment by Western societies (and the relative lack of concern about this impact) was the anthropocentric Christian worldview that had long dominated Western culture.

In the forty-five years since Carson's wake-up call there has been growing public debate about the possibility and implications of a looming environmental crisis. This debate has been marked by predictable resistance, given the financial implications both of acknowledging culpability and of undertaking the changes in business practices and in personal lifestyle that would be necessary to reduce significantly our impact upon the environment. Some of the resistance came in the form of challenges to the scientific data and models used in assessing the potential of the threat. Others insisted that technological fixes for any damage being done would be developed, if we simply let the market run its course. While echoes of both of these strategies remain, the last few years have witnessed a solidifying consensus in Western societies that the harmful impact of human activity upon the environment is real, and that efforts to mitigate this impact and to restore some of the prior damage must become priorities in our political and economic agendas.

Some of the lingering resistance to this increasing consensus is articulated in Christian terms, particularly in evangelical Protestant settings.³ In general, however, the major Christian communities have taken a lead role over the last thirty years in stressing the need to address environmental issues.⁴ Even in the evangelical arena a significant coalition has emerged that embraces the mission of protecting and healing the natural environment.⁵ Howard Snyder's essay in this issue stands within, and represents well, this broad Christian consensus.

But this brings us back to the Lynn White essay. How are we to relate

current Christian environmental advocacy with his claim about the negative influence of the traditional Christian worldview? The first thing to say is that the present advocacy does not directly refute White's thesis. White, the son of a Presbyterian minister, was not issuing a blanket indictment of biblical teaching or Christian tradition.⁶ He was contending that a particular way of reading Genesis 1–3, prominent in the Latin-speaking Western church, had served to encourage the assumption that the rest of nature was to be valued solely in terms of its contribution to human flourishing—and that humans should seek to control the rest of nature, extracting from it whatever they desired. When his essay turned from diagnosis to prescription, one of White's recommendations was for Western Christians to reclaim Saint Francis of Assisi's alternative sense of biblical teaching, which emphasized the kinship of humanity with the rest of nature. The growing support among Christian communities over the last few decades for addressing environmental issues has been fostered in part by precisely such attention to alternative voices within the Christian tradition.⁷

This allowed, there were major weaknesses in White's analysis. Indeed, the most enduring contribution of the essay has been the extensive scholarly debate that it sparked. This debate has challenged or added significant nuance to much of White's historical analysis of developments in medieval and early modern Western society.⁸ It has made clear that reading Genesis 1–3 with an emphasis on human dominion over the rest of creation was uncommon before the seventeenth century, and used in ambivalent ways when it did become common (more on this later).⁹ It has spawned a wealth of exegetical studies, like that of Sandra Richter in this issue, that challenge the anthropocentric reading of Genesis 1–3 and sketch out the broader biblical teachings about God valuing the whole of creation.¹⁰ Finally, it has deepened awareness of the ambiguity of Christian tradition concerning the relationship of humanity to the natural world—acknowledging the spiritualizing tendencies that have encouraged neglect and disdain for the rest of creation, while increasing awareness of a counterbalancing strand running through the history of the church that celebrates God's presence in, with, and under the created order.¹¹

A larger fruit of this focused debate over Lynn White's thesis is the growing number of constructive attempts to articulate the environmental implications of core Christian doctrines.¹² These studies suggest that the voices counterbalancing the spiritualizing tendencies in tradition were not idiosyncratic figures; rather, they were insightful witnesses to central convictions of Christian life and mission. By implication, the current Christian emphasis on environmental issues should not be dismissed as mere pandering to contemporary culture.

The present essay seeks to make this point with a focus on the Wesleyan

tradition. One of my goals is to place John Wesley among those who help counterbalance tendencies in Christian tradition to limit God's salvific concern merely to humanity (and even more narrowly, to human "souls" alone). While there is some ambiguity in Wesley on this point, emphasis on the holistic scope of God's salvific mission emerges clearly in his most mature writings.¹³ My second goal is to show that this emphasis on God's care for the whole of creation—and our calling to participate in this care—was not a tangential matter for Wesley; it grew out of some of his most central intellectual and theological convictions.¹⁴ I pursue these joint goals through a survey of some of Wesley's relevant convictions.

Creation Permeated with the Presence of God

Perhaps the most helpful way to organize the convictions that undergirded Wesley's mature emphasis on holistic mission is as alternatives to the typical charges made against the compatibility of the Christian worldview with concern for the environment. The first specific charge that Lynn White laid against Christianity in his essay was that it encouraged the neglect or abuse of nature by following the Bible in denying that any natural objects other than humans are inspirited.¹⁵ White framed this charge in explicit contrast with pagan animism and the "pantheistic" religions of Asia, which he presented as inherently respectful of all natural objects.

It was not long before scholars were pointing out instances of broad environmental neglect and damage in areas dominated by animistic and pantheistic worldviews, challenging the simplistic assumption of their superiority for encouraging humans to care for the natural world.¹⁶ Continuing study has led to recognition of significant support for environmental concern within most religious worldviews, while highlighting the ambiguous nature of the support in every case.¹⁷ Support is not limited to worldviews that are pan-psychic or that consider nature to be divine. It is sufficient that nature be accepted as sacred—as inherently related to the Divine and as revelatory of the Divine's presence and activity. Where this is accepted, there are theological grounds for maintaining that all natural objects deserve respect and care.

Acknowledging this point, it has become common more recently to connect the tendency in the Western world to neglect or abuse nature with the adoption in the early modern period of the scientific model of Descartes and Newton, which rendered matter totally inert and accounted for motion by imposed mechanical forces.¹⁸ For some this model led to the deistic conclusion that, while the "cosmic clock" was surely dependent upon God for its initial creation, it was not the scene of God's continuing presence and action. They concluded further that we are left to our own resources in dealing with the machine, free to tinker with it as we think best.

Wesley's awareness of such possible implications likely explains his hesitations about the mechanical model of nature. His general discomfort with Descartes is evidenced by Wesley's systematic deletion of references to Descartes from the original text (by Johann Buddeus) that provided the core of his *Survey of the Wisdom of God in the Creation*. Wesley's relationship to Newton was more ambiguous.¹⁹ He accepted Newton's basic cosmology, but feared that his mechanical explanation of motion suggested deistic conclusions. To protect against this, Wesley verged at times on reducing the laws of nature to mere descriptions of God's regular *direct* causation in the material realm. This is expressed most pointedly in a passage in his *Survey* borrowed from Thomas Morgan: "But what are the *general laws of nature*? They are plainly the rules or principles, by which the Governor and Director of all things, has determined to act. Accordingly what we call *mechanism*, is indeed the free agency and continued energy of the author and director of nature. All the necessary motion of bodies therefore, and all the laws and forces whereby it is communicated and preserved, are the continued, regular will; choice and agency of the first cause, and incessant mover and preserver of the universe."²⁰

More typically, he adopted the model of God, as First Cause, working through uniform secondary causes. A good example is another reflection on the laws of nature (this time, drawn from Isaac Watts) that Wesley included in the *Survey*:

Will you suppose that it derogates from the glory of divine providence to represent the great engine of this visible world as moving onward in its appointed course without the continual interposure of [God's] hand? It is granted, indeed, that his hand is ever active in preserving all the parts of matter in all their motions, according to these uniform laws; but I think it is rather derogatory to his infinite wisdom to imagine that he would not make the vegetable and animal, as well as the inanimate, world of such sort of workmanship as might regularly move onward in this manner for five or six thousand years, without putting a new hand to it ten thousand times every hour.²¹

But Wesley was characteristically quick to offset any potential deistic connotations of this classical model. In the first place, he refused to reduce God's providential activity to solely upholding the order of creation, insisting that God is also active on specific instances in ways that transcend such regular order (i.e., special providence, including miracles).²² More broadly, he sided with those who found Newton's model of inert matter in empty space unable to account for the motion in the universe, leading them to posit instead an all-pervading ether that served as the secondary

cause of all motion. Consider the opening of his introduction to *The Desideratum: or Electricity made Plain and Simple*:

From a thousand experiments it appears that there is a fluid far more subtle than air, which is every where diffused through all space, which surrounds the earth and pervades every part of it. And such is the extreme fineness, velocity and expansiveness of this active principle that all other matter seems to be only the body, and this the soul of the universe. This we might term “elementary fire.”²³

As this shows, Wesley shared their tendency to equate this ether with fire and (newly discovered) electricity—and even to hint that it was the primal form of the Spirit’s energizing presence in the universe.²⁴

Whatever one makes of Wesley’s claims scientifically, it is clear that he viewed nature as sacred—that is, as permeated by and revelatory of God’s energizing presence. What he defended in apologetic debate, his brother Charles captured in hymnic praise:

- 1 Author of every work divine,
Who dost thro’ both creations shine,
The God of nature and of grace,
Thy glorious steps in all we see,
And wisdom attribute to thee,
And power, and majesty, and praise.
- 2 Thou didst thy mighty wings outspread,
And brooding o’er the chaos, shed
Thy life into the’ impregn’d abyss,
The vital principle infuse,
And out of nothing’s womb produce
The earth and heaven, and all that is.
- 3 That all-informing breath thou art
Who dost continued life impart,
And bidd’st the world persist to be:
Garnish’d by thee yon azure sky,
And all those beauteous orbs on high
Depend in golden chains from thee.
- 4 Thou dost create the earth anew,
(Its Maker and Preserver too,)
By thine almighty arm sustain;
Nature *perceives* thy secret force,
And still holds on her even course,
And owns thy providential reign.

5 Thou art the Universal Soul,
 The plastic power that fills the whole,
 And governs earth, air, sea, and sky:
 The creatures all thy breath receive,
 And who by thy inspiring live,
 Without thy inspiration die.²⁵

In their joint testimony the Wesley brothers hover at the very edge of pantheism, so strong is their desire to portray how God's active presence and power permeate the created order.²⁶

Humanity Embedded in the Chain of Being

Ian McHarg, one of the sharpest critics of the compatibility of the Christian worldview with concern for the environment, takes us a step further in our consideration with his charge that "Christianity tends to assert outrageously the separateness and dominance of man over nature."²⁷ There are two issues intertwined in this charge. In this section I will consider the first suggestion that the traditional Christian worldview overly separates humanity from nature, thereby reducing nature to a mere "stage" for human life, with no inherent value.

Anyone familiar with Genesis 1–2 will find it outrageous how easily McHarg and others attribute the sharp separation between humanity and nature to these texts. Both accounts place the creation of humanity within the larger creation of the universe, with one emphasizing that "humans" are made from "humus" (*adam* from *adama*)—the same stuff as the rest of creation. Neither suggests that humans popped into a ready-made stage from outside. That said, we must acknowledge that this suggestion does emerge at times in later Christian tradition. Its source is not Scripture but the Platonism embedded in the Greco-Roman setting of early Christianity.

Strong appropriations of the Platonic suggestion that humans are pre-existent souls who have been consigned temporarily to this transient world (as, for example, in Origen) have been rare in the history of the church. Appropriation of the more subtle neo-Platonic focus on the human being as a "microcosm" of the whole cosmos, with the accompanying assumption that redemption of the "microcosm" can substitute for redemption of the whole cosmos, was much more common. But there was a third influential stream of Greco-Roman culture that offered an alternative to such tendencies to separate humanity from creation: the mix of Aristotelian and neo-Platonic emphases that portrayed the cosmos as a "great chain of being."²⁸ The central claim of this model was that the type of cosmos fitting for a Perfect Being to produce was one in which every conceivable niche was occupied by its appropriate type of being.

In a major study Clarence Glacken has argued that the modern ecological

ideas of the unity of nature and the balance and harmony of nature trace their roots back to this model of the chain of being.²⁹ Glacken identifies Cicero's *On the Nature of the Gods*, one of Wesley's favorite classical texts, as the most important ancient synthesis of the model. Turning toward the modern period, Glacken stresses the role of John Ray and Charles Bonnet in adapting the model to frame surveys of the burgeoning knowledge of the natural world. Both of these figures were deeply influential on Wesley. The title and content of his *Survey of the Wisdom of God in Creation* echo Ray's *Wisdom of God manifested in Creation* (1691), and he incorporated an extract on the chain of being from Bonnet's *Contemplation of Nature* (1764) into the *Survey*.

A quote from his extract of Bonnet can begin to suggest the theological and practical implications of Wesley's embrace of the chain of being model. In response to the suggestion that it would be better if humans were angels, Bonnet counsels:

Confess your error and acknowledge that every being is endued with a perfection suited to the ends of its creation. It would cease to answer that end the very moment it ceased to be what it is. By changing its nature it would change its place and that which it occupied in the universal hierarchy ought still to be the residence of a being resembling it, otherwise harmony would be destroyed. In the assemblage of all the orders of *relative* perfections consists the *absolute* perfection of this whole, concerning which God said "that it was good."³⁰

On these terms, there can be no ideal of humanity separate from the rest of nature! It would be a deprivation of all concerned, and a thwarting of God's creative will. Humans have a distinctive blend of qualities and a distinctive role, but our true home is within this interwoven chain. To put it in the language of Genesis, we belong in the garden.

The Human Vocation of Modest (and Chastened) Stewardship

If Wesley stands as a counter example to the first half of McHarg's indictment of the Christian worldview (that we unduly separate humanity from nature), what about the second half of the indictment—that we assert outrageously the dominance of humanity over the rest of nature. The description of the human role in the garden in Genesis 1:28 is the typical text cited in making this charge. I have already pointed to resources that debunk the equation of "dominion" in the Genesis text with "domination" or mistreatment. The biblical language is of a caretaker who "guards and cultivates" the garden (Gen. 2:15).

But for what purpose? Lynn White's most focused charge in his original essay was that, whatever the biblical text meant originally, it came to be

read in a way that justified humans valuing and using the rest of nature solely in terms of how it met *our* ends. Put sharply, “especially in its Western form, Christianity is the most anthropocentric religion the world has seen.”³¹ It is beyond our purposes to evaluate this comparative claim. What we must admit is that there were strong voices, beginning at least a century before Wesley, that invoked the biblical language of dominion to defend a strong anthropocentric valuation of nature. A relevant example is William Derham’s insistence that “We can, if need be, ransack the whole globe, ... penetrate into the bowels of the earth, descend to the bottom of the deep, travel to the farthest regions of this world, to acquire wealth, to increase our knowledge, or even only to please our eye or fancy.”³²

Wesley read Derham during his years as a student at Oxford, and includes extracts from Derham in the *Survey*. But he includes nothing, from Derham or elsewhere, that endorses this strong anthropocentric model of our relationship to nature. Part of the reason is that Wesley imbibed more deeply than Derham the convictions of the “chain of being” model of nature. While this model highlights (as ecologists would today) a range of ways that any particular species might contribute to the well-being of others above or below it in the chain, it also insists that every species has intrinsic value and a right to exist for its own purposes. John Ray, who was deeply shaped by this model, emphasized the relevant implication: “It is a generally received opinion that all this visible world was created for man, that man is the end of creation, as if there were no other end of any creature but some way or other to be serviceable to man. ... Yet wise men nowadays think otherwise.”³³ While Ray went on to insist that, in this interdependent chain, all species are in some sense serviceable to humanity and we would frustrate the purposes of their creation if we did not make appropriate use of them, he modeled for Wesley a *modest* anthropocentrism.³⁴

Wesley appropriated this model in a way that moved beyond Ray through his distinctive emphasis regarding our role as “stewards.” This emphasis is seen most clearly in his instructions on the use of money, where he criticizes any suggestion that resources put at our disposal are for us to use however we see fit. Wesley insists instead that everything belongs ultimately to God, that it is placed in our care to use as God directs, and that God directs us to use it for the benefit of others once our basic needs are met.³⁵ Extending this principle to the rest of creation, the focus of Wesley’s environmental ethic is better characterized as *theocentric* than anthropocentric. He portrayed the ideal relationship of humanity with creation (modeled by Adam in the Garden of Eden) as one of modest stewardship, where we devote our distinctive gifts to upholding God’s intentions for the balance and flourishing of all creation.³⁶

Most in Wesley’s day shared his assumption of the idyllic nature of the

original creation, with peace abounding between all creatures and humans possessing the knowledge to promote the thriving of the whole. They also shared the recognition that this was very unlike the world in which we live now, with “nature red in tooth and claw” (Tennyson) and humans largely at the mercy of the forces of nature. Differences emerged around the implications drawn from the present fallen condition for human interaction with the rest of nature. Many resigned themselves to the situation, as long as we are in the present world. Among the ones who believed that change was possible, the most significant distinction emerged between those (like Francis Bacon) who championed the mandate to *reclaim the mastery* over creation that was lost in the fall, and those (like Wesley) who pleaded for *resuming the loving stewardship* of creation that we abandoned in the fall.³⁷ While the first two alternatives could acquiesce to (or even justify) the aggressive domination of other creatures by humans, Wesley is representative of the third alternative in his portrayal of such domination as the epitome of the fallen practices that must be set aside.³⁸ Deeply aware of how much damage we have done, the stewardship that Wesley called for us to resume is not only modest but *chastened*.

Soul and Body make a Human (*and* an Animal!)

A quote from Ludwig Feuerbach can serve to sharpen focus on another element of most of the charges against the Christian worldview that have been considered so far: “Nature, the world, has no value, no interest for Christians. The Christian thinks only of himself and the salvation of his soul.”³⁹ While this indictment has an eschatological dimension (to which we will return), its implication is that Christians limit their concern and their ministry in the present to matters affecting “souls.” Rhetorical excerpts that fit this stereotype surely exist. But the holistic emphases of Scripture call it into question. Continuing strands of these emphases can be traced through most of the Christian tradition.

These holistic emphases emerge with increasing clarity in Wesley’s writings and ministry. In his later years he repeatedly appealed to a saying from the early church: “The soul and the body make a man; the Spirit and discipline make a Christian.”⁴⁰ He was usually invoking this saying in support of the contribution of the sacraments and of bodily practices like works of mercy to nurturing the spiritual life.⁴¹ But he also drew the parallel in connection with physical health, as evidenced in his exhortation of one of his assistants: “It will be a double blessing if you give yourself up to the Great Physician, that he may heal soul and body together. And unquestionably this is his design. He wants to give you ... both inward and outward health.”⁴² If this is God’s design, then for Wesley it was obvious that we should co-operate by doing all that we can to restore and preserve

our physical health. Our ministry to others should also address their needs for physical healing as well as for spiritual healing.⁴³

While such holistic mission to other humans is admirable, what about the rest of creation? To answer this question, it is helpful to return to Bonnet's description (in Wesley's *Survey*) of the character of the chain of being: "There are no sudden changes in nature; all is gradual, and elegantly varied. There is no being which has not either above or beneath it some that resemble it in certain characters, and differ from it in others."⁴⁴ This conviction led Bonnet to contest directly the influence of his countryman Descartes. In adopting a strict mind-body dualism and restricting mind to humans alone, Descartes essentially reduced all other animals to mere automatons—void of "soul" and even of real perception of pain or suffering. On this basis he argued that human use or abuse of other animals was not a matter of moral import. Bonnet was one of the strongest counter voices, reclaiming the biblical and Aristotelian notion that all animals have "soul" appropriate to their nature and that it is morally wrong when humans deprive animals of life, sustenance, or comfort for any purpose other than those intended within the order of creation.⁴⁵

Descartes was not the first to deny that animals had souls. This stance became a dominant strand in the Western church through the influence of Augustine.⁴⁶ But there were alternative voices, and Wesley became aware of the debate during his Oxford schooling, devoting one of his Master's lectures to the question of whether animals have souls.⁴⁷ While no copy of the lecture survives, he appears to have defended the biblical language of animals having "soul." He offered a guarded reaffirmation of this point in 1775, shortly after encountering the writings of Charles Bonnet.⁴⁸ A few years later he published in the *Arminian Magazine* an extended extract of John Hildrop's spirited defense of animal souls, which contested both Cartesians and such notables as John Locke.⁴⁹

Just as Wesley differed from Descartes on the constitution of animals, he differed on the moral import of our treatment of animals.⁵⁰ He placed in his *Journal* letters from correspondents decrying the evil of cruelty to animals and included in a sermon to parents a specific warning against letting children mistreat animals.⁵¹ His instructions to his traveling preachers were even more specific: "Be merciful to your beast. Not only ride moderately, but see with your own eyes that your horse be rubbed, fed, and bedded."⁵² Clearly Wesley was not among those who believed that Christians should restrict their present moral concern to human "souls."

All that God Loves, God will Redeem

The response to Feuerbach's accusation needs to go a step further. There is a long strand of Christian teaching that balances anthropocentric

tendencies by calling for humane treatment of animals, suggesting that our eternal destiny as humans is at stake in such matters.⁵³ But through much of the church's history, most who raised such caution failed to include animals themselves (or the rest of creation) within God's ultimate salvific concern. Although Scripture speaks of God's goal as the "new heavens and earth" (i.e., transformation of everything in the universe), a variety of influences led Christians increasingly to assume that our final state is "heaven above." The latter was seen as a realm where human spirits dwelling in ethereal bodies join eternally with all other spiritual beings (no animals!) in continuous worship of the Ultimate Spiritual Being.⁵⁴ By contrast, they assumed that the physical universe, which we abandon at death, would eventually be annihilated. It is this assumption which some critics point to as the deepest flaw in the Christian worldview for supporting broad and enduring environmental concern. If we believe that this world will be destroyed by fire, why try to preserve it?⁵⁵

It is particularly important to observe the development in Wesley's thought on this topic. He imbibed the spiritualized understanding of our final state in his upbringing, and through much of his ministry it was presented as obvious and unproblematic. A good example is the preface to his first volume of *Sermons*:

I am a spirit come from God and returning to God; just hovering over the great gulf, till a few moments hence I am no more seen—I drop into an unchangeable eternity! I want to know one thing, the way to heaven—how to land safe on that happy shore. God himself has condescended to teach the way: for this very end he came from heaven.⁵⁶

However, in the last decade of his life Wesley began to reclaim the biblical imagery of God's cosmic renewal, shifting his focus from "heaven above" to the future new creation.⁵⁷ After his tentative defense of animals having "souls" in 1775, he issued a bold affirmation of final salvation for animals in the 1781 sermon "The General Deliverance."⁵⁸ While not without precedent, this sermon was unusual for its time and is often cited today as a pioneer effort at reaffirming the doctrine of animal salvation in the Western church.⁵⁹ Broadening the scope even further, Wesley's 1785 sermon on "The New Creation" refused to limit God's ultimate redemptive purposes to sentient beings, insisting that the very elements of our present universe will be present in the new creation, though they will be dramatically improved over current conditions.⁶⁰

Some elements of Wesley's mature embrace of the cosmic scope of God's salvific mission deserve to be highlighted. First, the issue of theodicy was a significant prod in helping him reclaim this biblical theme. If not at

the time, Wesley certainly came to share the sentiments of his friend George Cheyne:

It is utterly incredible that any creature ... should come into this state of being and suffering for no other purpose than we see them attain here. ... There must be some infinitely beautiful, wise and good scene remaining for all sentient and intelligent beings, the discovery of which will ravish and astonish us one day.⁶¹

Wesley's eventual description of this scene would likely have astonished even Cheyne! Wesley had long doubted the adequacy of a theodicy that justified God's goodness in permitting the possibility of the fall by contending that God would eventually restore things to their pre-fallen condition. In his view, a truly loving God would only permit the present evil in the world if an *even better* outcome might be achieved by allowing this possibility than without it. On these terms, he believed that God would not just restore the fallen creation to its original state, God would recreate it with greater capacities and blessings than it had at first.⁶² Specifically, in "The General Deliverance" Wesley proposed that as compensation for the evil they experienced in this life God would move the various animals *higher up* the chain of being in the next life—granting them greater abilities, including perhaps even the ability to relate to God as humans do now!⁶³

While this proposal might seem to violate the most basic principle of the chain of being, Wesley was almost certainly borrowing it once again (this time, without reference) from Charles Bonnet.⁶⁴ A few years later Wesley republished a translated tract of Bonnet that focused this proposal on human destiny, calling it "one of the most sensible tracts I have ever read." In this tract Bonnet proposes that humans too will move up the chain of being in the next life, having far greater powers than now.⁶⁵ Apparently Bonnet found no violation to the integrity of the chain of being if the entire chain shifted upward! The more important point, for our purposes, is that Wesley's interest in this novel suggestion was surely deepened by the apparent convergence in the science of his day with his renewed appreciation of a biblical theme.

Wesley seems to have recognized an important theological convergence as well. He had long rejected the suggestion that God preemptively limited the gift of saving grace to only a portion of humanity (the "elect"), appealing to the biblical affirmation that God's "mercies are over all [God's] works" (Ps. 145:9).⁶⁶ In "The General Deliverance" he used the same verse to affirm God's saving concern for animals.⁶⁷ He was likely not the first to sense the parallel between these two matters. As Alan Rudrum points out, the strongest opponents of the notion of animal salvation in seventeenth-century England were the staunch predestinarians.⁶⁸ In striking

contrast, it was the mature Wesley's profound conviction that God's love extends to *all* that God has made, and that God *will* redeem all that God loves.

Anticipating the New Creation

Even if one accepts this cosmic scope for the eschaton, what is the implication of such a future hope for how we treat the broader creation *now*? Insight into this question can be gained from the sociological surveys aimed at testing Lynn White's thesis. As these surveys grew in sophistication—controlling for factors like age, gender, and education—they increasingly falsified the thesis that Christian affiliation or affirmation of the biblical account of creation would serve as significant indicators for lowered commitment to environmental protection.⁶⁹ But one theological factor did emerge as significant: ascription to dispensational eschatology.⁷⁰ This reflects the insistence of classic dispensationalism that things must become *worse* as we approach God's eschatological intervention, with its implication that those who try to slow or reverse this trend are working against the purposes of God.⁷¹

This is not the place to critique dispensational eschatology. I would simply note that Wesley's mature thought moved toward postmillennialism, which cultivated the polar opposite expectation that the church, through the power of the Spirit, was able and expected to bring about a significant realization of God's reign in our fallen world.⁷² As such, he defended his speculation about God's future blessing of animals in "The General Deliverance" on the grounds that it might provide further encouragement for us to *imitate now* the God whose mercy is over all his works.⁷³ We are not simply to long for God's final victory, we are to participate responsively in God's renewing work by anticipating this victory in our present actions. Avoiding abuse of animals, and helping prevent such abuse by others, is one dimension of how Wesley encouraged his followers to "anticipate the new creation."

Reflection on Wesley's Precedent

While other convictions could be added, those considered so far should be sufficient to give a sense of Wesley's counterbalance to the spiritualizing and anthropocentric tendencies that have made their way into Christian tradition. They also illustrate the dynamic interaction between his inherited convictions, his engagement with the science of his day, and his openness to hearing anew the witness of Scripture.

This precedent serves well as a model for Wesley's current ecclesial descendants. We cannot simply turn to him for our environmental ethic. There is too much that he did not treat. More importantly, some of his assumptions, while reinforced by the science of his day, are not convincing. To cite one example, Wesley assumed that all animal species were originally

tame or domesticated (as in the Garden of Eden) and that wildness was a result of the fall. This helps explain the absence in his writings of any concern for preserving wilderness areas. In theory, it could support an agenda of domesticating all species. But this agenda runs directly counter to the consensus of most ecologists today. True faithfulness to Wesley would lead us to reconsider this assumption, in conversation with current science, and in dialogue with the whole of Scripture.

Of course, even deeper faithfulness to Wesley would require most of us to put the general concern to care for the larger creation higher on our list of priorities!

Endnotes

1. Rachel Carson, *Silent Spring* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1962).
2. Lynn White Jr., "The Historical Roots of Our Ecological Crisis," *Science* 155 (1967): 1203–7; reprinted in a number of later settings.
3. Cf. Richard T. Wright, "Tearing Down the Green: Environmental Backlash in the Evangelical Sub-Culture," *Perspectives of Science and Christian Faith* 47 (1995): 80–91; E. Calvin Biesner, *Where Garden Meets Wilderness* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997); and Robert Royal, *The Virgin and the Dynamo: Use and Abuse of Religion in Environmental Debates* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999).
4. See Joseph K. Sheldon, *Rediscovery of Creation: A Bibliographical Study of the Church's Response to the Environmental Crisis* (Metuchen, NY: Scarecrow, 1992); and Roger S. Gottlieb, *A Greener Faith: Religious Environmentalism and Our Planet's Future* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006).
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6. This point is even clearer in Lynn White Jr., "Continuing the Conversation," in *Western Man and Environmental Ethics: Attitudes toward Nature and Technology*, edited by Ian Barbour (Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley, 1973), 55–64.
7. Cf. Dieter T. Hessel & Rosemary Ruether, eds., *Christianity and Ecology: Seeking the Well-Being of Earth and Humans* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2000); and R. J. Berry, ed., *Environmental Stewardship: Critical Perspectives, Past and Present* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 2006).
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9. See, in particular, Jeremy Cohen, *"Be Fertile and Increase, Fill the Earth and Master It": The Ancient and Medieval Career of a Biblical Text* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1989); and Peter Harrison, "Subduing the Earth: Genesis 1, Early Modern Science, and the Exploitation of Nature," *Journal of Religion* 79 (1999): 86–109.
10. To begin sampling this work, see Ellen Bernstein, *The Splendor of Creation: A Biblical Ecology* (Cleveland: Pilgrim Press, 2005); Norman C. Habel, ed., *Readings from the Perspective of Earth* (Sheffield Academic Press, 2000); and the *Earth Story* series, edited by Habel & Wurst (Sheffield Academic Press, 2000–01).
11. A formative work in this regard was H. Paul Santmire, *The Travail of Nature: The Ambiguous Ecological Promise of Christian Theology* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1985).
12. For a few recent examples, see Steven Bouma-Prediger, *For the Beauty of the Earth: A*

Christian Vision for Creation Care (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2001); Sigurd Bergmann, *Creation Set Free: The Spirit as Liberator of Nature* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005); Ernst M. Conradie, *An Ecological Christian Anthropology* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2005); and Denis Edwards, *Ecology at the Heart of Faith* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2006).

13. I have traced the larger trajectory of this emphasis in "Nurturing the New Creation: Reflections on a Wesleyan Trajectory," in *Wesleyan Perspectives on New Creation*, edited by M. Douglas Meeks (Nashville: Kingswood Books, 2004), 21–52; and "Celebrating the Whole Wesley: A Legacy for Contemporary Wesleyans," *Methodist History* 43.2 (2005): 74–89.

14. For previous reflections on this point see Robert Vincent Rakestraw, "The Contribution of John Wesley Toward An Ethic of Nature," *Drew Gateway* 56.3 (1986): 14–25; John B. Cobb Jr., *Grace and Responsibility* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1995), 52–55; John Harrod, "Wesleyan Reflections on Ecology," in *Windows on Wesley*, edited by Philip Meadows (Oxford: Applied Theology Press, 1997), 129–52; Theodore Runyon, *The New Creation: John Wesley's Theology Today* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1998), 200–207; and Michael Lodahl, *God Of Nature and of Grace: Reading the World in a Wesleyan Way* (Nashville: Kingswood Books, 2003).

15. White, "Historical Roots," 1205.

16. See, for example, the reflections on ancient China in Yi-Fu Tuan, "Our Treatment of the Environment in Ideal and Actuality," *American Scientist* 58 (1970): 244–49.

17. Cf. David Kinsley, *Ecology and Religion: Ecological Spirituality in Cross-Cultural Perspective* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1995); Richard C. Foltz, ed., *Worldviews, Religion, and the Environment: A Global Anthology* (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth/Thomson, 2002); and Roger S. Gottlieb, ed., *This Sacred Earth: Religion, Nature, Environment*, 2nd edition (New York: Routledge, 2004).

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19. See John English, "John Wesley and Isaac Newton's 'System of the World,'" *Proceedings of the Wesley Historical Society* 48 (1991): 69–86.

20. John Wesley, *A Survey of the Wisdom of God in the Creation*, 4th edn. (London: Paramore, 1784), 4:22. Cf. Sermon 26, "Sermon on the Mount VI," §III.7, in *The Works of John Wesley* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1984—) 1:581. Note: hereafter referred to simply as *Works*.

21. Wesley, *Survey of the Wisdom of God*, 2:258.

22. See Sermon 67, "On Divine Providence," §§19–26, *Works* 2:543–48.

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26. This desire is captured well in Lodahl, *God of Nature and of Grace*, Part II (pp. 107–65).

27. Ian McHarg, "Our Role in Nature," in *Environmental Decay in the Historical Context*, edited by R. Detweiler (Glenview, IL: Scott, Foresman & Co, 1973), 124.

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29. Clarence J. Glacken, *Traces on the Rhodian Shore: Nature and Culture in Western Thought from Ancient Times to the End of the Eighteenth Century* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967), esp. p. 379.

30. Wesley, *Survey*, 4:62.

31. White, "Historical Roots," 1205.

32. William Derham, *Physico-Theology* (London: Innys, 1713), 112. For perspective on diversity in Derham's context, see William Coleman, "Providence, Capitalism, and Environmental Degradation: English Apologetics in an Era of Economic Revolution," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 37 (1976): 27–44.

33. John Ray, *The Wisdom of God Manifested in the Works of Creation* (London: Samuel Smith, 1691), 127–28.

34. See *ibid.*, 176–77 note 39. Cf. John Hedley Brooke, "'Wise Men Nowadays Think Otherwise': John Ray, Natural Theology, and the Meanings of Anthropomorphism," *Notes Received by the Royal Society of London* 54 (2000): 199–213. Wesley read Ray in late 1732, prior to reading Derham.

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36. See Sermon 60, "The General Deliverance," §I.6, *Works* 2:444.

37. This distinction is highlighted in Harrison, "Subduing the Earth," 102–3.

38. See esp. his description of the negative impact of humanity upon creation in Sermon 60, "The General Deliverance," II, *Works* 2:442–45.

39. Ludwig Feuerbach, *The Essence of Christianity* (New York: Harper & Row, 1957), 287.

40. E.g., *Journal* (17 August 1750), *Works* 20:357; Sermon 113, "The Late Work of God in North America," §I.7, *Works* 3:598; and Sermon 122, "Causes of the Inefficacy of Christianity," §7, *Works* 4:90.

41. For more discussion, see Randy L. Maddox, "Wesley's Prescription for Making Disciples of Jesus Christ," *Quarterly Review* 23.1 (2003): 15–28.

42. Letter to Alexander Knox (26 October 1778), in *The Letters of the Rev. John Wesley, A.M.*, edited by John Telford (London: Epworth, 1931), 6:327.

43. More detail on Wesley's commitment to health of body and soul can be found in Maddox, "Celebrating the Whole Wesley," 83–85.

44. Wesley, *Survey*, 4:73.

45. This debate is surveyed in Hester Hastings, *Man and Beast in French Thought of the Eighteenth Century* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1936).

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51. See *Journal* (16 July 1756), *Works* 21:68; and Sermon 95, "On the Education of Children," §25, *Works* 3:360.

52. "Large Minutes," Q. 3, §21, in *The Works of John Wesley*, edited by Thomas Jackson (London: Wesleyan Methodist Book Room, 1872) 8:318.

53. See Richard D. Ryder, *Animal Revolution: Changing Attitudes toward Speciesism* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1989), 31–80.

54. For a good history of the ascendancy of this model, see Colleen McDannell & Bernhard

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55. See the discussion of this element of the critique of Christianity in Wesley Grandberg-Michaelson, *A Worldly Spirituality: The Call to Redeem Life on Earth* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1984), 33–35.

56. *Sermons* (1746), Preface, §5, *Works* 1:105.

57. For more details on this transition, see Maddox, “Nurturing the New Creation,” 43–49.

58. Sermon 60, “The General Deliverance,” *Works* 2:437–50.

59. See the positive reference to this sermon in Andrew Linzey, *Christianity and the Rights of Animals* (London: SPCK, 1987), 36. For a sketch of seventeenth-century precedents in Britain of affirming animal salvation, see Philip C. Almond, *Adam and Eve in Seventeenth-Century Thought* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 110–18.

60. Sermon 64, “The New Creation,” *Works* 2:500–10.

61. George Cheyne, *An Essay on Regimen* (London: Rivington, 1740), 86–87.

62. Cf. Sermon 59, “God’s Love to Fallen Man,” *Works* 2:423–35; and Sermon 63, “The General Spread of the Gospel,” §27, *Works* 2:499.

63. See Sermon 60, “General Deliverance,” §III.6–7, *Works* 2:448.

64. Bonnet presents a model of animals moving up the chain of being in the future life in *La Palingénésie philosophique; or Idées sur l’état passé et sur l’état futur des êtres vivans* (2nd edition. Munster: Philip Henry Perrenon, 1770), Parts 1–5 (1:187–97) and 14 (2:62–84). Volume 2 of this work, signed with Wesley’s initials and dated as obtained in 1772, is in the collection at Wesley’s House, London.

65. The tract was a translation of the last section of *La Palingénésie*, by an unidentified translator, issued as *Conjectures Concerning the Nature of Future Happiness* (York: J. Todd, 1785). Wesley’s republication—slightly abridged, with his preface and a few notes—was issued with the same title (Dublin: Dugdale, 1787).

66. Note the invocation of this verse in Sermon 110, “Free Grace,” §26, *Works* 3:556; and the preface to the first issue of the *Arminian Magazine*, reprinted in *Works* (Jackson) 14:279.

67. Note the citation of Ps. 145:9 in Sermon 60, “General Deliverance,” §III.10, *Works* 2:449.

68. See Alan Rudrum, “Henry Vaughan, the Liberation of the Creatures, and Seventeenth-Century English Calvinism,” *Seventeenth Century* 4 (1989): 34–54; esp. p. 50.

69. For a few samples to provide a sense of the trajectory, see Ronald G. Shaiko, “Religion, Politics, and Environmental Concern,” *Social Science Quarterly* 68 (1987): 244–62; Andrew Greeley, “Religion and Attitudes toward the Environment,” *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 32 (1993): 19–28; Conrad L. Kanagy, & Hart Nelsen, “Religion and Environmental Concern. Challenging the Dominant Assumptions,” *Review of Religious Research* 37 (1995): 33–45; and Bernadette Hayes & Manussos Marangudakis, “Religion and Environmental Issues within Anglo-American Democracies,” *Review of Religious Research* 42 (2000): 159–74.

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72. For details on this point, see Maddox, “Nurturing the New Creation,” 34–41.

73. Sermon 60, “General Deliverance,” §III.10, *Works* 2:449.

Sandra RICHTER

A Biblical Theology of Creation Care

Abstract

This essay briefly considers the seemingly modern topic of creation-care through a biblical theological lens, asking the question: “Is environmentalism a Christian value?” Tracing the narrative of Redemption from the Garden to the New Jerusalem (with particular attention given to the norms of Israelite society as regards land tenure and creature care), this article demonstrates that biblical law from every era communicates a similar theme: the earth, its produce, and its inhabitants belong to God, not to humanity. Moreover, according to Scripture, humanity’s role as regards the creation is that of steward. God takes great pleasure in his creation, has provided for it, and his expectation is that his people will respect and protect it. This becomes a particularly pertinent message to the Church in that we are only beginning to ask the question of how our identity as the redeemed people of God impacts our care of God’s creation. This article attempts to address that question by allowing the cumulative voice of Scripture to be heard in light of current environmental attitudes and practices.

KEYWORDS: creation care, environment, biblical theology

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In chapters thirty-eight and thirty-nine of the book that bears his name, Job is hammered with a series of questions from on high. The intent of this interrogation? To remind him that he is *creature* not *Creator*.

Have you ever in your life commanded the morning, or caused the dawn to know its place? . . . Have you entered into the springs of the sea, or have you walked in the recesses of the deep? . . . Is it by your understanding that the hawk soars, stretching his wings toward the south? Is it at your command that the eagle mounts up, and makes his nest on high? (Job 38:12, 16; 39:26-27)

When I hear these questions voiced, I echo Job's response, surely not I. I can hardly understand these mysteries, let alone mimic or duplicate them. Only the Master of the Universe can do such things. Rather, I respond to these astounding aspects of creation with worship. As a daughter of Eve, I am so designed. When I stand at the ocean's edge, and feel the spray of its raging force on my face; when the wind silences me; when I am privileged to hold a wild creature in my hands or to watch the majesty of a hawk floating through the air, my heart cries out with the psalmist:

O Lord, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth; you who has displayed your splendor above the heavens! (Psalm 8:1)

This is as it should be. But the Scriptures teach that there is a further response that God expects from those who call him "lord." The response of which I write is the believer's God-ordained duty of creation-care. The objective of this essay is to consider this seemingly modern topic through the lens of our ancient rule for faith and practice, the Bible. My goal is to provide a brief survey of a biblical theology of creation care, and to begin to answer the question: "Is environmentalism a Christian value?"

Let us begin at the beginning. In Genesis chapter one God reveals his plan for his creation. Here the interdependence of the cosmos is laid out within the literary framework of a perfect "week." On the seventh day, God is enthroned above his creation, and He rests. This communicates not only His complete satisfaction with what has gone before, but also that the perfect balance of God's ideal plan is dependent on the sovereignty of the Creator. Of great significance is the penultimate climax of the piece.

On the *sixth* day, a steward is enthroned, under the Creator but over the creation:

Then God said, 'Let us make humanity in our image, according to our likeness; and let them rule' (Gen 1:26)

Hence, whereas the outworking of God's ideal design is dependent on the sovereignty of the Creator, so too, it is the privilege and responsibility of the Creator's stewards to facilitate this ideal plan by means of living their lives as a reflection of God's image. This was God's perfect plan.

The role of the human stewards within the created order is specified in Genesis chapter two:

Then Yahweh Elohim took the human and put him into the garden of Eden to tend it (*'bd*) and guard it (*šmr*). (Gen 2:15)

The larger message of these accounts is clear: the garden *belongs* to Yahweh, but *'ādām* (a collective term meaning "humanity") was given the privilege to rule and the responsibility to care for this garden under the sovereignty of their divine lord. And so God's ideal is initiated—a world in which *'ādām* would succeed in constructing the human civilization by directing and harnessing the abundant resources of the garden under the wise direction of their Creator. Here there would always be enough, progress would not necessitate pollution, expansion would not demand extinction. The privilege of the strong, would not necessitate the deprivation of the weak. And humanity would succeed in these goals *because of* the guiding wisdom of God.

But we all know the story; humanity rejected this perfect plan and chose autonomy instead. And because of the authority of their God-given position within the created order, *humanity's* choice cast the *entire cosmos* into disarray. As Romans 8 details, because of *'ādām*, even "the creation was subjected to futility" (Rom 8:20). We readily recognize the results of *'ādām's* choice in the arena of human relationships: poverty, greed, violence, etc. Moreover, we recognize and embrace the role of the redeemed community to stand in opposition to those societal norms. But rarely, it seems, do we reflect upon the impact of our rebellion on the garden. And rarely, it seems, do we consider how the reality of redemption in our lives should redirect our attitude toward the same.

Let us consider Israel, who stands as the first model of God's relationship with a redeemed people. Israel is reminded over and over again that the good land they are about to receive is a gift. Although they are invited to abide upon the land with joy and productivity, it will never

truly be theirs. As in the garden, God owns the land; it is humanity's privilege to live upon it. Not only does Yahweh retain the right to reclaim His land, He makes it very clear that the land will be distributed to whom *He* chooses. As a result, the citizens of Israel are not allowed to abuse each other or the land by means of the self-serving acquisition and sale of real estate (Lev 25:13-17; 23; cf. Isa 5:8). Even the produce of the land belongs to Yahweh. As is reiterated throughout the laws of the first fruits, the tithe, and the gleaning laws, it is Yahweh's expectation that the Israelites will not exhaust the produce of the land in their quest for economic success (e.g. Deut. 14:22-28; 18:1-5; Exod 23:19; Lev 19:9-10). Rather Yahweh commands that Israel reserve a portion of the produce of the land for the marginalized among them.

When you reap the harvest of your land, you shall not reap the corners of your field; the remnant of the harvest you will not gather. But you will leave what remains for the needy and the immigrant. I am Yahweh your God. (Lev. 23:22)

Moreover, Yahweh commands that the land itself be given a sabbath such that it might be able to replenish itself.

But during the seventh year the land shall have a sabbath rest, a sabbath belonging to Yahweh; you shall not sow your field nor prune your vineyard. Your harvest's after growth you shall not reap, and the grapes of your untrimmed vines you shall not gather . . . Rather the sabbath (growth) of the land shall be your food: belonging to you, your male servant, your female servant, your hired man, your temporary resident, and the immigrants among you. Even your beast and the wild animal that is in your land shall have all its crops to eat. (Lev. 25:4-7)

In contrast to the consumer culture in which we live, Leviticus teaches that it is not acceptable to take from the land everything you *can*. Rather, God's people are commanded to leave enough so that the land is able to replenish itself for future harvests and future generations—even though such methods would significantly cut into the farmer's short-term, agricultural profits. Why? “Because I am the Lord, says Yahweh.” In other words, because this is Yahweh's land and Yahweh's produce and Yahweh intends that his land be fruitful for the next generation of tenants. Moreover, it is apparent that Yahweh intends a portion of his harvest to be distributed to the voiceless among his people: the slave, the refugee, the domestic animal, and the wild creature. In sum, these Israelite laws communicate that *economic growth* is not a viable excuse for the abuse of the

land, the abuse of the poor, or the abuse of wild creatures. I wonder what those stripping Canada of its boreal forests for paper production (at a current rate of five acres a minute¹), those creating lunar landscapes in Eastern Kentucky by means of “mountain top removal” coal mining,² or the factory “farmers” who have achieved near-constant production made possible only by the intensive application of pesticides and caustic chemical fertilizers³ might say about God’s law to Israel? I wonder what God might have to say to those of us who are growing rich from these endeavors?

Even in the midst of the crisis of warfare, God’s people are commanded to treat God’s gift with care. Deut. 20:19 states:

When you besiege a city a long time, to make war against it in order to capture it, you shall not destroy its trees by swinging an axe against them; you may eat from them but you shall not cut them down. For is the tree of the field a man that it should be besieged by you?

Hence, in Israel, even national security was not a viable excuse for the abuse of the earth or the magnificent flora He has designed to reside upon it.

And what do the Scriptures teach regarding the creatures that inhabit this planet with us? Perhaps the most visible message is found in the account of the great flood. Although God judges the world because of its corruption, he *rescues* animal kind along with humankind. He also makes his recreational covenant with “every living creature that is with you, the birds, the cattle, and every beast of the earth” (Gen 9:10-11). *All flesh* is deemed worthy of God’s deliverance and His ongoing covenant. In the elegant verse of Psalm 104 and the Whirlwind speeches of the Book of Job cited above, we hear the poetic celebration of the beauty and dignity of the wild animal *and* its habitat.

He is the one who sends forth the springs into the wadis; between the mountains they flow; giving drink to each of his wild creatures. (Ps. 104:10)

Do you know the time the mountain goats give birth? Have you watched the calving of the deer? ... Who sent out the wild donkey free? Who loosed the bonds of the swift donkey, to whom I gave the wilderness for a home, and the salt land for his dwelling place? (Job 39:1, 5-6)

These passages demonstrate that even in a fallen world, God rejoices in the beauty and balance of His creation. Moreover, God has designed the created order *so that* His wild creatures will have the food, water, and habitat

that they need to survive and prosper. It is Yahweh who “sent out the wild donkey free” and “gave to him the wilderness for a home” (Job 39:5-6). It is by *His* understanding that the hawk soars “stretching out his wings toward the south,” and it is by His command that the eagle nests in the high country (Job 39:26-27). Since any environmentalist would say that the single greatest cause of the extinction of animal species is the reckless destruction of their habitat—and we in America are presently devouring nearly 2 million acres a year for the noble quest of urban sprawl⁴—the fact that the wild animals’ habitat was designed and given to them by God should give us pause.⁵

In Israel’s era, Yahweh promulgates laws that protect both the domestic creatures who serve Israel, and the wild creatures who inhabit the promised land with Israel. According to Deut 25:4, an Israelite shall not muzzle the ox while he drags the threshing sledge for his master. In other words, the beast who serves us should be allowed the opportunity to enjoy its life and work, even if it cuts into our profits a bit. How would this deuteronomic law reflect on the billions of animals who currently serve us in America’s factory farms? Creatures who spend their *lives* stacked one atop the next in row upon row of tiny wire cages, immersed in their own feces, confined in windowless warehouses, *never* seeing the light of day? Creatures who are force-fed food to the point that their internal organs fail, who are sustained in such crowded and filthy conditions that any semblance of a natural life is stripped from them, and enormous doses of antibiotics are necessary to control infection.⁶ Is this what Yahweh intended for the creatures He entrusted to *’ādām*?

Consider as well the complex levitical legal structures that accompany the slaughtering of animals. Israel was certainly allowed to slaughter and eat the animals they raised, but any domestic animal had to be taken before the priest *first*. According to Leviticus 17, this practice was to serve in part as a sign that its *nepeš* its *life* has been considered.⁷ In Israel, the life of the animal was valuable; it was not to be taken without thought, or without mercy.⁸ Reflect upon these laws in comparison with the assembly line approach we employ in the raising, slaughtering, and mass marketing of animal flesh in America.⁹ I am horrified to report that current practice is such that the animals we eat are slaughtered in such massive numbers that the slaughter houses cannot even ensure that they are dead before dismemberment begins.¹⁰ Have you ever considered the *life* of the styrofoam and cellophane packaged chicken parts you purchase at Wal-mart every week? Israel was constrained to do so, by levitical law.

As for the wild animals, Deut 22:6-7 commands:

If you happen upon a bird’s nest in front of you in the road, or in

a tree, or upon the ground, with young ones or eggs, and the mother sitting upon the young or on the eggs, you shall not take the mother (who is sitting) upon the young. Rather, you will shoo the mother away, and the young you may take for yourself, in order that it may be well with you and that you may prolong your days.

Thus Israel is instructed that if they killed off the wild creatures without a thought as to the creatures' ability to replenish their populations, it would not "be well" with Israel in the land. I believe the same would apply to us.

All of these laws of land, tree, and creature communicate a similar theme: the land, its produce, and its inhabitants belong to God, not humanity. God takes pleasure in His creation. He has designed it, provided for it, and His expectation is that His people will respect and protect it. If I were to summarize the message of the Old Testament regarding creation-care into a single proverb it would be this: *The earth is the Lord's and all it contains; you may make use of it in your need, but you shall not abuse it in your greed.*

And what of the New Testament? The realities of land tenure and creature-care are not as visible in the New Testament as they are in the Old. This is due in part to the more urban audience of the New Testament texts, and in part to the New Testament's focus on its most central objective—revealing the character of the new 'Adām, and explaining how it is that his brethren might live in this present world as "citizens of another kingdom." Still, the message of the garden continues to reverberate in its new context: "For by Him all things were created, *both* in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things have been created by Him and for Him" (Col 1:16). Rather than the Old Covenant message changing with the New, it is reinforced.

Moreover, the ultimate miracle of the New Covenant is that in Christ, all of the cosmos will at last be liberated. As Paul elaborates in Romans 8, it is not only 'ādām who anxiously awaits "the revealing of the sons of God," but all of creation as well.

For the creation was subjected to futility, not of its own will, but because of Him who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself also will be set free from its slavery to corruption into the freedom of the glory of the children of God. (Rom 8: 19-21).

Why does *creation* anxiously long for the revealing of the sons of God? Because at the *parousia* creation will at last be freed from the chaos of 'ādām's rebellion, it too will be healed from the effects of sin. John the Revelator offers us a glimpse of the master plan in chapters twenty-one

and twenty-two of his book. Here what we name “heaven” is identified as “a new heaven and a new earth” where the cosmic river is free to flow, and the tree of life has multiplied such that it lines the street of the city (Rev 21:1; 22:1-2). In other words, “heaven” is not only Eden-restored, “heaven” is this very earth, healed of its scars and washed clean of its diseases. And the fact that Romans 8 speaks of the believer’s bodily resurrection (the ultimate expression of one’s identity as the redeemed child of God) in concert with the resurrection of the creation, speaks volumes regarding the intrinsic value that God places upon this planet and its creatures. These are not simply intended as objects for our consumption.

In light of this biblical testimony, where should Christians position themselves regarding creation-care? Of all the voices and all the “facts” that are presently calling for our allegiance in the arena of philosophical, theological, and political environmental thought, there is one voice I believe every Christian wants to hear—that of Scripture. And of all the messages regarding creation-care that might be attributed to the Bible, one seems incontrovertible to me: the garden and its creatures are not ours, they are His. At the dawn of creation, *’adām* was appointed to care for the garden, specifically to tend it (*’bd*) and to defend it (*šmr* Gen 2:15). Our fallen race has instead chosen to use its superior gifts to exploit and to abuse. In our greed we have taken what we wanted with no concern (often no thought) as to what the consequences of our behavior might be upon God’s good gift. The statistics are staggering: countless waterways poisoned, thousands of species lost, millions of acres decimated, unfathomable quantities of trash. Humanity was created and commanded to *serve* and to *protect*, yet humanity has instead *ravaged* the garden. And like the results of *’adām*’s choice in the arena of human relationships, in the arena of our relationship with creation, the results are all around us.

But God’s people are called to be different. In this fallen world, the role of the redeemed community is to live our lives as an expression of another Kingdom, to reorient our values to those of our heavenly Father, to live our lives as Adam and Eve should have, as Jesus Christ has. Our calling is to demonstrate with our *lives* “what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect” (Rom. 12:2). What is the will of God regarding creation?

Then Yahweh Elohim took the human and put him into the garden of Eden to tend it (*’bd*) and to protect it (*šmr*). (Gen. 2:15)

How then can we avoid this message, that it is our responsibility as redeemed humanity to live in such a way that the intentional stewardship of God’s creation is evident in our lives?

Give us all a reverence for the earth as your own creation, that we may use its resources rightly in the service of others and to your honor and

glory. Lord, in your mercy. Hear our prayer.

Endnotes

1. Jeff Hull, "The Final Frontier," *Audubon* (Sept-Oct 2005), 46: "The advocacy group Forest Ethics reports that about half of the paper [is] used to print magazines, newsprint, and the 17 billion catalogues produced annually in the United States...."

2. Mountaintop removal (MTR) is a relatively new form of coal mining that requires the targeted site to be clear cut and then leveled by the use of explosives in order to reach the minerals desired. Demolition may extend as far as 1,000 feet below the surface. The "overburden" (the vegetation, topsoil, rock, etc.) is typically dumped into surrounding valleys ("Mountain Top Removal," n.p. [cited 30 August 2006]. Online: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mountaintop_removal.htm).

Due to the need to dump the "overburden," 6,700 "valley fills" were approved in central Appalachia between 1985 and 2001 and "[t]he U.S. EPA estimates that over 700 miles of healthy streams have been completely buried by mountaintop removal and thousands more have been damaged (Erik Reece, "Moving Mountains," *Orion* [Jan/Feb 2006]. Cited 30 August 2006. Online: <http://www.grist.org/news/maindish/2006/02/16/reece.htm>). The environmental results of this method are literally devastating. Water tables under the mountain are eliminated, surrounding ground water is frequently poisoned by the coal slurry byproduct, and the potential for the re-growth of forests or any type of plant life larger than grasses is rendered improbable (ibid.). The rationale for MTR is money. MTR is lucrative for coal companies because the utilization of explosives and large machinery significantly reduces the need for workers.

See the web site "Appalachian Voices" for a grassroots perspective on the profound impact this mining method is having upon the lives, income, property, and health of the poor in Appalachia who are forced to live with the impact of this shameful practice (http://www.appvoices.org/index.php?/site/mtr_overview/.htm).

3. There are a plethora of websites that address the issue of pesticide and fertilizer use in American farming. One might start with the National Resource Defense Council at <http://www.nrdc.org/health/pesticides/olgpesticides.asp>.

4. One estimate for general land consumption is 365 acres per hour ("Smart Growth/Sprawl," n.p. [cited 31 August 2006]. Online: <http://www.nrdc.org/cities/smartGrowth/default.asp.htm>). The American Farmland Trust estimates that more than one million of those acres are agricultural land ("America's Agricultural Land is at Risk," n.p. [cited 31 August 2006]. Online: <http://www.farmland.org/programs/protection/default.asp.htm>).

5. One of the most devastating results of urban sprawl in the United States has been the destruction of wetlands. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service reports that roughly 58,500 acres of wetlands are being destroyed annually ("Clean Water and Wetlands," Sierra Club n.p. Online: <http://www.sierraclub.org/wetlands/htm>). Yet wetlands serve an array of critical roles in the survival of every species on this planet—birds are particularly dependent upon the swamps and marshlands that humans too often consider wasted space. For a focused introduction to this far ranging problem see Audubon's special issue "America's River," an exposé of the abuse of the mighty Mississippi River and its impact (May-June 2006).

6. See the Humane Society's "The Dirty Six: The Worst Practices in the Agribusiness," n.p. (cited 28 August 2006). Online: www.hsus.org/farm_animals/factory_farms.htm.

7. See Jacob Milgrom, *Leviticus: A Book of Ritual and Ethics* (CC. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2004), 184-92 for further discussion. Note that 17:4 states that "bloodguiltiness" (i.e. murder) will be upon the person who slaughters without taking the animal before the priest.

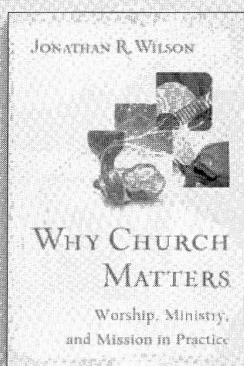
8. Regarding the method of slaughter detailed in the Talmud, Milgrom states: "All of these [details] clearly demonstrate the perfection of a slaughtering technique whose purpose is to render the animal immediately unconscious with a minimum of suffering." As regards the secular slaughterer, Milgrom further summarizes: "Moreover, by virtue of his training and piety, his soul shall never be tormented by his incessant butchery but kept ever sensitive to the magnitude of the divine concession in allowing him to bring death to living things" (Leviticus, 105-106).

9. The abuses to which domesticated animals are routinely subjected on factory farms are nearly too horrific to report, and most Americans find it more comfortable not to ask questions. Few of us realize that animals used in agriculture have almost no legal protection. Rather, they are viewed as vehicles of production and commerce. Speaking of farm animals in America, the website for the Humane Society of the United States reports: "these animals aren't afforded any legal protection while on the farm. More than 95% of them—birds—aren't even included in the regulations implementing the federal Humane Methods of Slaughter Act, which requires other animals to be rendered insensible to pain before they are killed ("Factory Farms," n.p. [cited 29 August 2006]. Online: http://www.hsus.org/farm_animals/factory_farms.htm).

For current methods of slaughter in the United States, see Matthew Scully's excruciatingly honest and crushingly well-researched account of what the animals we eat endure in the raising, delivery, and slaughter process (*Dominion: The Power of Man, the Suffering of Animals, and the Call to Mercy* [New York: St. Martin's Griffin, 2002], 247-86).

10. "38 million cows and calves are slaughtered annually in the United States. Ten years ago the typical American slaughter plant operated at 50 kills per hour. Now, at newer plants, it is 300-400 per hour ... As Martin Fuentes, an IBP worker, told *Washington Post* reporter Joby Warrick in 2001, 'The line is never stopped simply because an animal is alive.' Ramon Moren, "whose job is to cut off the hooves of strung-up cattle passing by at 309 an hour" reports that although the cattle are supposed to be dead when they reach him, often are not: "They blink. they make noises. The head moves, the eyes are open and still looking around. They die piece by piece" (Scully, *Dominion*, 284).

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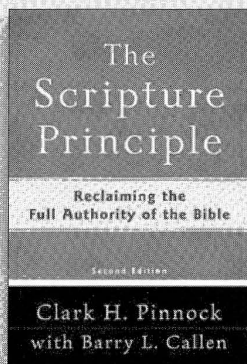
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Lacey WARNER

Situating the Word: The Significance of Christian Space for Evangelism

Abstract

With Protestant denominational membership declining steadily, and at times dramatically, since the 1960s, numerous local churches eagerly search for ways to attract new members. In efforts to reverse this trend, or at least slow it down, many have turned to techniques more informed by market logic and capitalist ideologies than the triune God revealed in biblical texts. One such technique insists upon creating “gathering spaces” with little if any evidence of Christian identity. Not even the nomenclature (e.g. “gathering space” instead of “worship space” or “sanctuary”) indicates the nature of the purposes intended for these spaces. Many conclude the more sterile and unmarked a space the more welcoming and, therefore, evangelistic it is.

This essay begins with a brief proposal to more fully reclaim biblical foundations for evangelism. Through a canonical approach that reads the biblical texts theologically, a richer perspective of evangelistic understandings and practices emerges. Second, this essay explores one implication of such a canonical and theological approach. If the language and practices of the gathered community are constitutive for initiating and forming people in the Christian faith, might the space in which they gather be theologically significant? In this article I argue that recognizing and ordering the sacred character of a gathering space can lead to its significant role in Christian invitation and formation in contemporary communities of faith—thus *situating the Word*.

KEYWORDS: evangelism, Christian identity, sacred space, worship

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With Protestant denominational membership largely declining steadily, and at times dramatically, since the 1960s, numerous local churches eagerly search for ways to attract new members. In efforts to reverse this trend, or at least slow it down, many have turned to techniques more informed by market logic and capitalist ideologies than the triune God revealed in biblical texts. One such technique insists upon creating “gathering spaces” with little if any evidence of Christian identity. Not even the nomenclature (e.g. “gathering space” instead of “worship space” or “sanctuary”) indicates the nature of the purposes intended for these spaces. An assumption behind these techniques is that Christian symbols and language may offend or exclude. Thousands gather weekly in local churches without names, in rooms without symbols, and are not offended. Many conclude the more sterile and unmarked a space the more welcoming and, therefore, evangelistic it is.

Such an understanding of evangelism neglects biblical and theological foundations outlined in related scholarship. A major theme within the current academic study of evangelism is the initiation of individuals into the reign of God.¹ This return to a theological—rather than anthropological—foundation relies upon an understanding of evangelism as the heart of God’s mission,² integrating the once (and sometimes still) estranged components of word and deed. Such an understanding of evangelism includes a process of Christian initiation in communities of faith that emphasizes both language and practices in response to God’s invitation.³ This notion of evangelistic/missional wholeness has led to a critique of evangelistic methods lacking theological foundations.⁴ The current arguments, however, and the trajectory generally, seem constrained by a relatively narrow reading of scripture.

This essay begins with a brief proposal to more fully reclaim biblical foundations for evangelism. Through a canonical approach that reads the biblical texts—both Old and New Testaments—theologically, a richer perspective of evangelistic understandings and practices emerges. This brief consideration first surveys the limitations of several current studies with regard to biblical foundations followed by possible contributions of a canonical and theological perspective. By taking seriously the Old Testament as Christian scripture alongside the New Testament, we begin to see a more textured and dynamic understanding of God’s mission and

the church's participation in it through evangelism.

Second, this essay explores one implication of such a canonical and theological approach. If the language and practices of the gathered community are constitutive for initiating and forming people in the Christian faith, might the space in which they gather be theologically significant? Could theological reflection upon the invitational and formative role of space (whether in architectural design, furnishings, or decorative art) in light of biblical foundations provide possibilities for further enrichment? In the following reflections I do not insist upon an aesthetic prescription for how the space of gathered Christian communities should be constituted. Rather, based on a theological reading of biblical texts, recognizing and ordering the sacred character of a gathering space can lead to its significant role in Christian invitation and formation in contemporary communities of faith—thus *situating the Word*.

A Canonical and Theological Approach

As William Abraham notes, an understanding of evangelism based merely on specific biblical terms is insufficient.⁵ Many projects within the academic study of evangelism begin with or give prominent place to etymological analyses of evangelism and related biblical terms, most often focusing on Greek antecedents (*euangelizesthai*).⁶ This method privileges the term and its use in the New Testament, and further, extended to the Hebrew equivalents (*basar*), drastically narrows the possibilities for a theological reading of evangelism in the Old Testament.⁷ Abraham clarifies the problem: "At issue is the appropriation of what evangelism has actually meant in the early church and in history, not judged by the etymology of the word *evangelism* and its rather occasional use in Scripture, but by what evangelists have actually done in both proclaiming the gospel and establishing new converts in the kingdom of God."⁸ As Abraham acknowledges, first, such language usage is relatively limited in biblical texts. The Greek terms related to evangelism seldom appear in the gospels, for example, in Jesus' commissions to the disciples. Second, as etymological studies demonstrate, the uses of biblical terms related to evangelism consistently convey practices myopically focused upon verbal proclamation. Since etymological studies alone are inadequate, how might Christian communities read the biblical texts to better contribute to understandings and practices of evangelism?

Even the most helpful theological projects in the study of evangelism are informed by biblical foundations that seldom reach beyond the New Testament. Abraham, Arias, and Jones, for example, while acknowledging the Old Testament frame as a reference for comprehending the reign of God, concentrate their biblical exegesis and theological reflection in the

New Testament.⁹ Likewise, from Barrett and Bohr's etymological studies to Klaiber and Bosch's comprehensive exegesis, most academic treatments of evangelism remain dependent upon the New Testament with little or no consideration of the Old.¹⁰ Other biblical scholars reflect theologically upon mission, in some cases to the exclusion of evangelism. However, even those related texts with helpful insights for evangelistic understandings and practices seldom emerge in the academic study of evangelism.

While the New Testament is essential for Christian theology and discipleship, and the previously referenced texts make significant contributions to the study of evangelism, there may be a tendency, if unintentional, for Christians to simply dismiss the majority of the canon as merely historical background.¹¹ Such dependence upon the New Testament without adequate acknowledgement of its relationship to the Old Testament—also Christian scripture—seems dangerously close to a neo-Marcionism. Ironically, the first “Bible” of the early church was the Old Testament. As a people of “one” book, though two testaments, Christians must remain attentive to the distinctive witness of each.¹² A canonical approach to biblical interpretation can offer a fresh hermeneutic, revealing further texture and resources—while not glossing over distinctions—for understanding evangelism in the contemporary context.¹³

From Going to Gathering

Implicit in the current trajectory within the academic study of evangelism is a reorientation from the traditional notion that evangelism, particularly in the New Testament, functions mainly as a centrifugal dynamic of “going out.” Julian Hartt, writing half a century ago, refers to this dynamic as “the church go[ing] out into the world to preach the gospel.”¹⁴ Hartt's statement, while demonstrating this traditional notion, also indicates an important theological shift in the church's self-understanding from the church sending messengers to share the gospel to God's sending the church as messenger to the world.¹⁵ While this shift in self-understanding is significant, a merely centrifugal understanding of evangelism does not offer a comprehensive representation of the biblical witness—even in the New Testament.

Mortimer Arias addresses this truncated understanding when he argues for the biblical emphasis on hospitality as a paradigm for evangelism, particularly as a distinctive mark of Christians and their communities in the New Testament.¹⁶ Arias explains: “Christian mission from its beginning has been centrifugal mission—going from the center to a periphery in the world. Mission cannot remain at any center, it has to move to new boundaries and frontiers: ‘to all peoples everywhere,’ ‘to the whole world,’ ‘to the whole creation,’ ‘to the end of the earth,’ and ‘to the end of time.’”¹⁷ Hence, when many think of God's mission and the church's participation

in evangelism, the general dynamic is one of *going*. Yet there is another dynamic, modeled in the Old Testament: “Israel is the missionary people of God, ‘the light of the nations,’ whose primary mission is not to *go* but to *be* the people of God.”¹⁸ For Arias, this characteristically Old Testament dynamic of centripetal mission changed following the resurrection and Pentecost to the traditional, centrifugal pattern. However, even in the New Testament, the notion of centripetal mission remains—“by attraction, by incarnation, by being.”¹⁹

A similar recognition of the dual dynamic of centripetal and centrifugal evangelistic practices appears in more recent studies. For example, Brad Kallenberg, in *Live to Tell*, concludes: “Faithfulness in evangelism must simultaneously attend to both the group and the individual.”²⁰ Evangelism informed by biblical foundations includes not just centrifugal proclamation to the individual but centripetal participation in the life of the gathered Christian community. Drawing on insights from postcritical theory, Kallenberg argues for the essential role of communities in inviting, initiating, and forming Christian disciples: “The first lesson for evangelism to be gleaned from postcritical philosophy, then, is the importance of embodying the story of Jesus in our communal life. Such a community provides the context that demystifies the gospel by making it concrete.”²¹ The biblical narrative culminating in the story of Jesus Christ and the subsequent embodiment of that narrative in the communal life of Christians is the essence of evangelism. Kallenberg proposes a broader understanding of evangelism beyond centrifugal verbal proclamation, such that “we insist on embodying the story in the web of relationships that constitutes our identity.”²² “Simply put,” says Kallenberg, “when viewed through a postcritical lens, conversion can be understood as entailing the change of one’s social identity, the acquisition of a new conceptual language, and the shifting of one’s paradigm.”²³

At least two components foster the acquisition of this new conceptual Christian language. First, “fluency is gained by participation in the linguistic community’s *form of life*—that weave of activity, relationships, and speech that gives the community its unique personality.”²⁴ And second, “we learn a conceptual language by means of our community’s stockpile of interpretive stories.”²⁵ Kallenberg builds upon George Lindbeck’s suggestion that our religious world is limited or expanded by the conceptual language at our disposal.²⁶ So, Christian invitation, initiation, and formation includes a changed social identity and a new conceptual language facilitated through narratives—the most significant, found in biblical texts—as well as activities and relationships cultivated within the gathered community of faith.

Such a perspective may be recognized among younger evangelicals, who

in their worship are increasingly incorporating liturgical practices and resources from traditions such as Catholic, Orthodox, and Episcopal.²⁷ Orthodoxy offers a paradigmatic example of the evangelistic significance of the language and practices of the gathered Christian community. While the ecclesiocentric perspective of Orthodoxy often equates the church with the reign of God, the gathered community provides a visible, concrete witness to the fulfillment of the gospel.²⁸ From the Orthodox perspective, participation in God's mission is initially centripetal, a gathering of the community of faith to participate in the liturgy.²⁹ This intensely evangelistic "eucharistic ecclesiology" arguably facilitates a changed social identity through formation in a new conceptual language, informed by biblical texts including the salvation narrative of the liturgy. Individuals are initiated into the reign of God following the acquisition of this new language and participation in accompanying practices such as confession, forgiveness, and reconciliation. For Orthodoxy, in addition to *worship*, which culminates in the Eucharist, *unity*—the ecumenical unity of Christ's church—is essential for participation in God's mission.³⁰ Ideally, the (centripetal) gathering of Christ's church to worship through the Eucharist participates in a dual dynamic with God's (centrifugal) sending of the church into the world for witness through service.³¹

Situating the Word

Miraslov Volf, speaking at the 2003 *Practicing Theology* conference, remarked: "Church membership is not declining in many areas [for example the Southeast United States]; however, the church's influence upon person's lives is lessening dramatically."³² This is a troubling claim. Despite the seeming rally of pockets within mainline Protestant denominations after decades of numerical decline, Volf argues that the church is accomplishing little in the struggle against nominal Christianity. Response to such a claim necessitates an attentive patience that attempts with some humility to recognize and address the various facets of an immensely complicated system. In this spirit, the following explores merely one facet and its possible implication for the current trajectory within the study of evangelism.

Our working concept of evangelism takes seriously the role of the gathered community of faith in Christian invitation, initiation, and formation. While the language, practices, and relationships cultivated in community are essential in Christian invitation, initiation, and formation, might it be that the space in which the community gathers also plays a part? In an attempt to make such spaces more functional and welcoming designers at times actually sacrifice the evangelistic potential of space for inviting and forming Christian disciples. In an American context within

which the vast majority of individuals claim “Christianity”, though often so anemically that biblical illiteracy pervades, it seems appropriate to reflect upon the invitational and formative role of gathering spaces—particularly when a number of “thriving” local churches refrain from employing sacred architecture and symbols.³³

Theological reflection upon the ordering of Christian space begins with biblical texts. While biblical foundations for the study of evangelism focus predominantly upon the New Testament, the Old Testament offers substantial resources for theological reflection upon evangelistic theology and practices. The Old Testament also provides guidance in thinking theologically about the gathering space of faith communities. Interestingly, the biblical texts offer detailed descriptions of only two (land-based) products of human labor, both for the purpose of worship: the portable tabernacle, built during the wanderings in the wilderness, and Solomon’s temple in Jerusalem.³⁴ While Solomon’s palace, a much grander edifice than the temple, took almost twice as long to build, it barely receives mention in biblical texts.³⁵ Instead, the biblical writers are concerned with the construction of *sacred* space.³⁶ For biblical scholar Ellen Davis, this demonstrated interest in the building of sacred space results from a recognition of the “very real way a sanctuary has a kind of creative capacity of its own,” namely, to form those gathered in the space—and specifically, to form them in faith.³⁷

The construction and representation of sacred space embodies the relationship between God and creation. The seven-speech description of the building of the tabernacle in Exodus, for example, parallels the sevenfold structure of the creation narrative of Genesis chapter one.³⁸ In this way, the sacred space of the tabernacle constructed by humans comes into being in a process similar to God’s good creation, that is, through obedient response to God’s commands.³⁹ Further, the description of the tabernacle’s construction, like the narrative of creation, concludes with an act of blessing. According to Davis, “the very same wording is used: just as God blessed the Sabbath when ‘the heavens and the earth were finished’ (Gen.2:1), so Moses blessed the people, when ‘all the Tabernacle-work was finished’ (Ex. 39:32, 43). The point of these parallels is to show that the Tabernacle is a microcosm, a small image of the world as it stands under the blessing of God.”⁴⁰ Thus, the design and construction of sacred space for the gathered community simultaneously grounds the community in God’s creation and elevates its imagination—hearts and minds—toward God.⁴¹ Such an orientation contributes to an eschatological perspective from which to understand individuals’ initiation into the reign of God and formation into Christian identity.

Jeanne Halgren Kilde, in *When Church Became Theatre: The Transformation of Evangelical Architecture and Worship in Nineteenth-Century America*, acknowledges the complex character of sacred spaces: “At once messengers and agents, mirrors and actors, they enable people to think through their ideas about religiosity and convey them to the rest of the world while, in turn, influencing those ideas and shaping religion and society.”⁴² A similar theme has emerged in the context of theological education that attends to the formative role of space.⁴³ James White argues that the worship space of seminary communities forms its students by influencing their understanding of both humanity’s relationship to God and the nature of the worshipping community. According to White, “The chapel can reinforce images that we [theological educators] would disown if stated in words, but the building’s silent witness is often more powerful than we admit.”⁴⁴ This formation of the seminarian’s imagination then becomes a definitive characteristic of their later pastoral leadership.⁴⁵

The process of theological inculturation shares similarities with that of Christian initiation as described by Kallenberg. For both, participation in the community is essential to formation. Jackson Carroll et al. define “culture” as “those shared symbolic forms—worldviews and beliefs, ritual practices, ceremonies, art and architecture, language, and patterns of everyday interaction—that give meaning and direction ... to the people who participate in them.”⁴⁶ In their comparative study of culture and formation in two seminary contexts, Jackson and his colleagues found that “some students are very little impacted by the schools’ cultures. They simply are so little involved in significant encounters with the culture, especially outside the classroom, that they miss immersion in the rich symbolic, ritual, and conversational life that takes place in chapel, hallways, dorm rooms, dining halls, or student hangouts. One must ‘be there’ to be formed in any significant way by the culture.”⁴⁷

So, those participating in Christian and theological formation are formed not only by *being there* in the gathered community but also by the symbolic forms of language, narratives, and practices—as well as art and architecture—which reflect, for good or ill, the meaning and mission of the community’s shared identity. Indeed, individuals participate in formation, or, as White implied, counter-formation, by their very presence in the gathered spaces. Therefore, the more intentional a gathered community’s use of language, sharing of narratives, participation in practices, *and* ordering of space⁴⁸—in prayerful and humble discernment—the more faithful will be their continued formation as they live into the fullness of humanity’s relationship with God in Christ through the Holy Spirit and relationship with others.

Imaging the Word

Alongside the construction and ordering of sacred space, symbols and art can make the gospel message accessible to largely illiterate (or nominal) professing Christians. In this way, they assume an evangelistic (invitational and formative) purpose. Symbols and art, ideally inspired by the divine revealed in biblical texts, witness to God's reign in Jesus Christ and through the Holy Spirit the possibility of humanity's participation.⁴⁹ Throughout Christian tradition voices particularly among Orthodox and Roman Catholics claim the significance of images for Christian formation, while Protestant Reformers mainly offer criticism. At least one exception to this Protestant criticism is Martin Luther's acknowledgement of the educational role of artistic images in faith formation. Influenced by the growing literacy facilitated by the printing press, Luther would not explicitly defend the use of images.⁵⁰ However, unlike other influential Reformers, neither would he decry their use.⁵¹ While Luther vehemently disapproved the worship of images, he claimed them "praiseworthy and honourable" for their witness.⁵²

I have myself seen and heard the iconoclasts read out of my German Bible. I know that they have it and read out of it, as one can easily determine from the words they use. Now there are a great many pictures in those books, both of God, the angels, men and animals, especially in the Revelation of John and in Moses and Joshua. So now we would kindly beg them to permit us to do what they themselves do. Pictures contained in these books we would paint on walls for the sake of remembrance and better understanding, since they do no more harm on walls than in books. It is to be sure better to paint pictures on walls of how God created the world, how Noah built the ark, and whatever other good stories there may be, than to paint shameless worldly things.⁵³

Luther argued that for him it was impossible to hear the biblical narratives without forming mental images: "If it is not a sin but good to have the image of Christ in my heart, why should it be a sin to have it in my eyes?"⁵⁴

Luther's position followed others within Christian tradition. One of the most often quoted texts regarding images in Reformation and medieval conversation is the moderate stance of Pope Gregory I (the Great, c.540-604) in a letter to Serenus, Bishop of Massilia.⁵⁵ Gregory the Great opposed both the worship and the destruction of images, encouraging instead their formational role: "For to adore a picture is one thing, but to learn through the story of a picture what is to be adored is another. For what writing presents to readers, this a picture presents to the unlearned who behold, since in it even the ignorant see what they ought to follow; in it the illiterate read."⁵⁶ Likewise, in the midst of volatile iconoclasm in the ninth century,

the Fourth General Council of Constantinople (869-70) declared veneration of the image and of the written word to be equivalent—accepting images as expressions of the word accessible to the illiterate:⁵⁷

We decree that the sacred image of our Lord Jesus Christ, the liberator and Saviour of all people, must be venerated with the same honour as is given to the book of the holy Gospels. For, as through the language of the words contained in this book all can reach salvation, so, due to the action which these images exercise by their colours, all, wise and simple alike, can derive profit from them. For, what speech conveys in words, pictures announce and bring out in colours.⁵⁸

Hence, sacred spaces in which Christian communities gather may participate in the evangelistic process of Christian invitation and formation through the language—even the proclamation—of images depicted in art.

Proclaiming Beauty?

A danger with arguing for the significance of space (as well as images and art) related to Christian invitation and formation is the tendency to default into assumptions about beauty that desire a dominant culture's perception of opulence without virtue. Theological reflection upon the gathering spaces of Christian communities will not necessarily lead to the finest guildings and craftsmanship in the spirit of Saint Denis, the Abbey Church near Paris famous for its influence upon Gothic church art and architecture beginning in the early twelfth century. While these spaces are beautiful and at times provide a context for meaningful witness and ministry, more modest spaces also serve a formative role for Christian communities. My purpose is not to insist upon a particular stylistic emphasis with regard to local church edifices and worship spaces. Rather, my hope is for us to reflect theologically upon the significance of the spaces in which our Christian communities gather for worship and fellowship, their relationship to God's sending us in service to the world, and the implications of these for Christian witness, specifically evangelism.

A consistent theme throughout Christian tradition recognizes beauty as a way to God. Beauty and the truly beautiful reside in and flow from the divine. Whether divinely created beauty in nature—even the simple purity of light—or humanly crafted beauty such as sacred art and architecture all beauty turns humanity toward God. Indeed, according to Karl Barth, beauty is the deepest description of God's eternity and glory:

If we can and must say that God is beautiful, to say this is to say how He enlightens and convinces and persuades us. It is to

describe not merely the naked fact of His revelation or its power, but the shape and form in which it is a fact and is power. It is to say that God has this superior force, this power of attraction, which speaks for itself, which wins and conquers, in the fact that He is beautiful, divinely beautiful, beautiful in His own way, in a way that is His alone, beautiful as the unattainable primal beauty, yet really beautiful.⁵⁹

Thus humanity, drawn to God's beauty, comes to know God's love. For Barth, "God loves us as the One who is worthy of love as God. This is what we mean when we say that God is beautiful..."⁶⁰ God's beauty not only reveals dimensions of God's nature that invite us to contemplate God's image; it ultimately invites us to participate in the beauty of God's unfolding reign. When spaces are ordered with their formative role in mind, they contribute in positive ways to a gathered community's witness through facilitating Christian identity and practices. Christian practices of worship and service to the world, within and from particular gathering spaces, together reflect the beauty of God's unfolding reign and contribute to Christian invitation and formation in local churches.

An example of such a modest local church might be Asbury Temple United Methodist Church, located in an economically depressed and transitional neighborhood in the small southern city of Durham, North Carolina. In need of some repairs, built early in the 1920s on a still busy corner, this local church with a high rotunda ceiling accented by stained glass windows with Christian symbols that allow light to illumine the fan-shaped seating enjoys an incredibly intimate space. Previously inhabited by a middle-class European American congregation, a historically African American Methodist congregation (once segregated as a part of the Central Jurisdiction) now worships in the space. The intimacy of the seating to the pulpit and altar, characteristic of the Akron plan, designed for the entertainment of its observers, now situated under a glass and metal cross invite participation through testimonies of song, narrative, and sermon as well as the weekly celebration of Eucharist. The stained glass windows given by those of a different time, remind those gathered from diverse economic and racial background of the changing Christian witness of the saints in that place throughout the generations. Offering significant leadership within the civil rights movement in that city, this local congregation continues to participate in God's unfolding reign through tutoring children and food distribution as well as Christian hospitality to homeless persons. This Christian community not only knows why it gathers, but to what it invites others.⁶¹

As I argued earlier, an understanding of evangelism based solely upon etymological studies and focused narrowly upon verbal proclamation does

not represent the full witness of the biblical texts. However, through a more nuanced theological reading of those texts, as well as texts formative to Christian tradition, the language of proclamation is not bereft of possibilities. God's beauty, offered to humanity in Jesus Christ through the Holy Spirit, proclaims the message of salvation beyond words. Gregory of Nyssa elaborates on the implications of God's beauty, the image of God in Jesus Christ, for humanity:

This Person who is beyond knowledge and comprehension, . . . because of His love for man, became Himself an "image of the invisible God" so that he took on the form which He assumed among you, and again, through Himself, He fashioned beauty in accord with the character of the Archetype. Therefore, if we also are to become an "image of the invisible God," it is fitting that the form of our life be struck according to the "example" of the life set before us.⁶²

The image of God's beauty and love in the example of Jesus Christ invites humanity's participation in God's reign within the gathered community of faith. The gathered community, in turn—through its language, and practices, as well as its space—reflects God's beauty to the world. Such proclamation situated and imaged in and through the community of faith is perhaps evangelism in its fullest conception.

Notes

1. For example, William J. Abraham, *The Logic of Evangelism* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989); Mortimer Arias, *Announcing the Reign of God: Evangelism and the Subversive Memory of Jesus* (Eugene: Wipf & Stock, reprint 1999, 1984); Scott J. Jones, *Evangelistic Love of God and Neighbor: A Theology of Witness and Discipleship* (Nashville: Abingdon, 2003).

2. Dana L. Robert, *Evangelism as the Heart of Mission* (New York: General Board of Global Ministries, 1997); David J. Bosch, "Evangelism: Theological Currents and Cross-currents Today," *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 11 (July 1987): 98-103.

3. See George Lindbeck, *The Nature of Doctrine* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1984); Brad Kallenberg, *Live to Tell* (Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2002); and Carl E. Braaten and Robert W. Jenson, eds., *The Strange New Word of the Gospel: Re-Evangelizing in the Postmodern World* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002).

4. Phil Kenneson, "Selling [Out] the Church in the Marketplace of Desire," *Modern Theology* 9 (October 1993): 319-48.

5. While Abraham and Jones (among others) abandon the notion of evangelism as merely verbal proclamation, Barrett's historical survey of the term and its general meaning as verbal proclamation seems to maintain a significant voice in the conversation. See Abraham, *Logic of Evangelism*, 41-44, 49-91; Jones, *Evangelistic Love of God and Neighbor*, 16-17, 45-64; David B. Barrett, *Evangelize! A Historical Survey of the Concept* (Birmingham: New Hope, 1987).

6. For example, Barrett, *Evangelize!* 9-20; David Bohr, *Evangelization in America: Proclamation, Way of Life and The Catholic Church in the United States* (New York: Paulist, 1977), 13f; and Walter Klaiber, *Call and Response: Biblical Foundations of a Theology of Evangelism* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1997), 19f.

7. Stephen B. Chapman and Lacey C. Warner, "Jonah: An Old Testament Theology of Evangelism" (unpublished essay).

8. Abraham, *Logic of Evangelism*, 69.

9. For references to the Old Testament in their studies, see Abraham, *Logic of Evangelism*: for understanding the reign of God, 23-25, 31; for etymological study of evangelism related to proclamation in fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy, 40-43; in reference to the Shema in Mark 12.29-31 to demonstrate the implications for love of God and neighbor in Christian conversion and initiation, 134-35; with regard to a theology of world religions, 219-20, 222. See also Jones, *Evangelistic Love of God and Neighbor*: for the starting point of evangelism in God's love (which leads to God's reign) in brief surveys of the Old and New Testament, 33-38; like Abraham, referring to Jesus' quotation of Deuteronomy 6.5 (Shema) in Mark and Matthew and his inclusion of Leviticus 19, making note of Jesus' explanation in Matthew that on these "hang all the law and the prophets" and reminding the reader that these were the entirety of the Jewish Scriptures at the time, 50-51; beginning his discussion of "God's Mission and the Mission of the Church" with reference to God's election of Israel "as a key turning point in the history of salvation" and the blessing of the nations through Abraham's faithfulness, 53; describing the NT as a missionary document, 55. Mortimer Arias, in *Announcing the Reign of God*, likewise refers to a relatively small number of Old Testament references, particularly in initial chapters, to establish the nature of God's reign; see 4, 14-15, 19-24, 28-29, 52, 85, 89-90.

10. David Barrett devotes only a few paragraphs, the majority of one page, to "usages before Christ," with a survey of occurrences in 2 Samuel, Psalms, Writings, and Prophets; see Barrett, *Evangelize!* 10. David Bohr begins chapter one with an etymology of the language of evangelism with a few paragraphs on Old Testament foundations. The language can mean any good news (Nahum 1.15), but it develops into good news of the reign of God (Is 40.9-10; Is 52.7-8); see Bohr, *Evangelization in America*, 11-12. Bohr also mentions the universal/particular elements of the Old Testament, specifically Abraham as a blessing to all the nations, 13. Walter Klaiber's etymology begins with evangelism's root in the Old Testament followed by discussion of Isaiah's implications for the practice, 21-22. Although described as biblical foundations for a theology of evangelism, Klaiber's text does not engage the Old Testament in any depth until pages 102-7, which is a discussion of judgment and the preaching of the prophets. Klaiber tends to alternate chapters/sections between biblical exegesis and theological reflection. However, the theological reflection focuses primarily on the New Testament with little if any mention of the Old Testament; see Klaiber, *Call and Response*. See also David Bosch, *Transforming Mission* (Maryknoll: New York, 1991), 15-31. While Bosch acknowledges that for the Christian church there is no New Testament divorced from the Old, "on the issue of mission we run into difficulties here, particularly if we adhere to the traditional understanding of mission as the sending of preachers to distant places (a definition which, in the course of this study, will be challenged in several ways)"; see *ibid.*, 15-16. The argument of this essay, with Bosch, is critical of such a traditional understanding, but at the same time moves beyond his comparatively brief treatment of the Old Testament to a canonical and theological approach.

11. Stephen B. Chapman, "A Canonical Approach to Old Testament Theology? Deuteronomy 34.10-12 and Malachi 2.22-24 as Programmatic Conclusions," *Horizons in Biblical Theology* 25 (December 2003): 121-45.

12. Brevard S. Childs, *Biblical Theology of the Old and New Testament: Theological Reflection on the Christian Bible* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1993), 90-94.

13. For a detailed proposal, see Chapman and Warner, "Jonah."

14. Julian Hartt, *Toward a Theology of Evangelism* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1955), 113. Hartt describes the church's task, "its entire energy is to be exhausted in proclaiming the love by which it has been created and which is given for the redemption of the whole creation," 117.

15. "The phrase *Missio Dei*, 'the mission of God', has a long history. It seems to go back to a German missiologist, Karl Hartenstein. He coined it as a way of summarizing the teaching of Karl Barth 'who in a lecture on mission in 1928 had connected mission with the doctrine of the trinity.... The phrase became popular in ecumenical circles after Willingen world mission conference in 1952, through the work of Georg Vicedom." See Chris Wright, "Mission as a Matrix for Hermeneutics and Biblical Theology" (unpublished paper presented at the University of St. Andrews, *Scripture and Hermeneutics Seminar*, August 2003), 72.

16. Mortimer Arias, "Centripetal Mission or Evangelization by Hospitality," *Missiology: An International Review* 10 (January 1982): 69-71.

17. Ibid., 74.

18. Ibid., 74-75. Italics mine.

19. Ibid., 75. "Jesus himself called his disciples to be: the salt of the earth, the light of the world, the city upon a hill, the leaven in the dough—all images of incarnational Christian witness." However, Arias's compartmentalization of centripetal mission/evangelism, to the Old Testament, also invites further nuance. See Chapman and Warner, "Jonah."

20. Kallenberg, *Live to Tell*, 21.

21. Ibid., 54.

22. Ibid., 48.

23. Ibid., 32. For Kallenberg, "conversion" means "change."

24. Ibid., 41. Italics original.

25. Ibid.

26. Ibid., 40; see Lindbeck, *The Nature of Doctrine*, 60-61.

27. Robert E. Webber, *The Younger Evangelicals: Facing the Challenges of the New World* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2002), 197, 195-204.

28. Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 207.

29. Ibid.

30. Ibid., 208.

31. Ibid., 210.

32. Miraslov Volf, remarks at *Practicing Theology* conference, Yale Divinity School, April 3-5, 2003.

33. Webber, *The Younger Evangelicals*, 205. For a detailed discussion of evangelical trends in church architecture since the nineteenth century, see Jeanne Halgren Kilde, *When Church Became Theatre: The Transformation of Evangelical Architecture and Worship in Nineteenth-Century America* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002). On church architecture as entertainment, see *ibid.*, 217, 219. Kilde compares such spaces to shopping malls. The amphitheatre plan and employment of technological innovations is not new to megachurches but rather repeats the strategies of evangelical churches in the 1870s and 1880s, *ibid.*, 215. Kilde notes: "As the Reverend Lee Strobel, a pastor at Willow Creek, pointed out about St. Paul's Cathedral in London, 'The lighting is bad, you can't hear the guys up front, and it's uncomfortable.' He continued, 'We wanted Willow Creek to be more functional,'" *ibid.*, 216. While effective in executing megachurches' strategies, such a rationale has an anthropological rather than a theological starting point.

34. Ellen F. Davis, "The Tabernacle Is Not a Storehouse: Building Sacred Space," (unpublished paper presented at Duke Divinity School, *Holy and Beautiful* conference, February 23, 2005), 2.

35. Ibid. See I Kgs. 6:38-7:1: the temple took only seven years to build; the palace, thirteen.

36. Ibid., 2-3. According to Davis, thirteen chapters in Exodus detail the tabernacle and its furnishings, and Kings and Chronicles each have extensive reports on the construction and décor of Solomon's temple. Davis also notes the architectural vision in the last nine chapters of Ezekiel, describing the temple that is to replace the one Nebuchadnezzar's army destroyed.

37. Ibid., 3.

38. Ibid., 7. See also Samuel E. Balantine, *The Torah's Vision of Worship* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1999), 138-40, cited in Davis.

39. Davis, "The Tabernacle Is Not a Storehouse," 7.

40. Ibid. With regard to the tabernacle as microcosm, Davis refers to R. E. Clements, *God and Temple: The Presence of God in Israel's Worship* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1965), 67.

41. See Davis, "The Tabernacle Is Not a Storehouse, 5. Implicit in the reference to God's creation is its goodness. Webber mentions this dimension specifically with regard to interest in sacred art among younger evangelicals; see Webber, *The Younger Evangelicals*, 209, 205-215.

42. Kilde, *When Church Became Theatre*, 10. Kilde notes further: "Given the capacity of architecture both to embody and to broadcast ideas and meanings, to impose and to maintain them, the church buildings of evangelical Protestants provide evidence of their beliefs, missions, rituals, challenges, and fears during the turbulent period of the nineteenth century;" *ibid.*, 11. R. Kevin Seasoltz articulates similar ideas from a Roman Catholic perspective: "Over the centuries, the architectural forms of Christian churches and their artistic appointments have taken diverse forms reflective of the structure of the liturgical rites and the theological underpinnings of such rites. However, the church buildings themselves and their appointments have also conditioned both positively and negatively the ways in which the liturgy has been celebrated and the theological understanding of the liturgy. Architectural and artistic styles have reflected both the phenomenon of inculturation and that of tradition. In fact architectural and artistic traditions are simply records of inculturation from the past; as such they provide us with a storehouse of models and resources for proper inculturation today." Seasoltz, *A Sense of the Sacred: Theological Foundations of Christian Architecture and Art* (New York: Continuum, 2005), 345-46.

43. James F. White, "The Seminary Chapel Building as Spiritual Formation," *Theological Education* 38 (2001): 102.

44. *Ibid.*, 101.

45. *Ibid.*, 103.

46. Jackson W. Carroll, Barbara G. Wheeler, Daniel O. Aleshire, and Penny Long Marler, *Being There: Culture and Formation in Two Theological Schools* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 252. This understanding of culture is informed by Clifford Geertz, "Religion as a Cultural System," in *Anthropological Approaches to the Study of Religion*, ed. Michael Banton (London: Tavistock, 1966), 1-46; Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures* (New York: Basic Books, 1973); and Ann Swidler, "Culture in Action: Symbols and Strategies," *American Sociological Review* 51 (1986): 273-86.

47. Carroll et al., *Being There*, 266.

48. According to Seasoltz, "The experience of God's mystery is discovered above all when we are conscious of God's presence and have centered our lives in God. That experience flourishes in a climate of hospitality, of welcome, in which people are present to one another as the body-persons they are, as members of the body of Christ, comfortable with one another, gathered together with one another, capable of seeing and hearing all that is enacted within the worshiping assembly. An attractive beauty in all that is said and done, used or observed is the best way to facilitate the experience of mystery, for God is not only goodness and truth; God is also beauty." Seasoltz, *Sense of the Sacred*, 343-44. Much can be accomplished in ordering space without extravagant building projects. Again, Seasoltz: "If we acknowledge that no human words or architectural or artistic forms can exhaust the infinite mystery of God, but that countless forms can become channels through which God comes to us and we go to God, then we need concrete criteria to judge those forms that are especially useful in our celebrations of the Christian mystery;" *ibid.*, 343. For theologically informed and helpful guides to ordering and construction Christian sacred space, see James F. White and Susan J. White, *Church Architecture: Building and Renovating for Christian Worship* (Akron: OSL Publications, 1998, third printing, 2004) and Richard Giles, *Re-Pitching the Tent: Re-ordering the Church Building for Worship and Mission*, 3rd ed. (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2004).

49. For further discussion see Richard J. Powell, *Black Art: A Cultural History* (London: Thames and Hudson, reprint 2002); Martin Oh, *African Theology in Images* (Blantyre, Malawi: CLAIM, 2000); and Leslie King-Hammond, "The Bible and the Aesthetics of Sacred Space in 21st century African American Experience," in *African Americans and the Bible* (New York: Continuum, 2000), 433-47.

50. Kilde, *When Church Became Theatre*, 11. According to Kilde, Luther was among Reformed theologians who argued that written and spoken language were the exclusive representations of divine power.

51. Martin Luther, "Against the Heavenly Prophets in the Matter of Images and Sacraments" (1525), in *Theological Aesthetics: A Reader*, ed. Gesa Elsbeth Thiessen (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005), 132.

52. Ibid., 133.

53. Ibid., 133-34.

54. Ibid., 134.

55. Thiessen on Gregory the Great, *Selected Epistles*, in *Theological Aesthetics*, 47.

56. Gregory the Great, *Selected Epistles*, in Thiessen, *Theological Aesthetics*, 47.

57. Thiessen on "Fourth General Council of Constantinople 869-70," in *Theological Aesthetics*, 65. This stance, the equal status of word and image, is unique to the Orthodox Church. See Leonid Ouspensky and Vladimir Lossky, *The Meaning of Icons*, 2nd ed. (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1999).

58. "Fourth General Council of Constantinople 869-70," in *Theological Aesthetics*, 65-66.

59. Karl Barth, "The Doctrine of God," *Church Dogmatics*, vol. 2, in Thiessen, *Theological Aesthetics*, 315.

60. Ibid.

61. I am grateful to Rev. Shane Benjamin, pastor of Asbury Temple UMC, for his knowledge of historical details and assistance in composing this material.

62. Gregory of Nyssa, "On Perfection," in Thiessen, *Theological Aesthetics*, 40.

James R. THOBABEN

Believers and Engagement in Society
A Review Essay

A sampling of books from the perspectives of:

Mainliners

Secularists

Roman Catholics

Evangelicals

James R. Thobaben is professor of church in society at Asbury Theological Seminary in Wilmore, Kentucky.

Conflict, Justice and Character: A Never Ending Moral Problem

An organization of which I am a part — not an organizationally significant part, but a noticeable one — recently experienced tension to the point of genuine animosity amongst and within its various constituencies. Sometimes the disagreement was framed in us-against-them terms, sometimes ‘why can’t we all just get along,’ sometimes with righteous indignation, sometimes with hesitancy. As should come as no surprise, those who felt the strongest, or at least spoke the most, tended to frame the differences in the stark language of black and white, yes and no, for and against. Shades of interpretation were often dismissed as a luxury or excessive cautiousness or even betrayal.

As discussions proceeded in meetings and in parking lots and over coffee, questions were asked — sometimes rhetorically, but sometimes in an effort to discern how individuals should respond to the conflict. Who had legitimate authority? Was the cause of one side or another just and, even if so, did the intentions of the various parties correspond to their claimed cause? Were innocent people (non-combatants) being hurt? Are the responses proportional? Intentionally or not, the criteria of Just Coercion were being debated in hallways and over lunch in the cafeteria: *just cause, right intention, legitimate authority, last resort, reasonable chance of success, proportionality of response and cause, discrimination of non-combatants.*

This all took place within a Christian organization. Everyone seemed to know that the preferable language for discourse should have been that of covenant, and the dominant virtues should have been kindness and respect. Sadly, though, it seemed many participants finally believed that such was just not possible. Some claimed the inability to use the language of love for all the other participants was based on the unjust actions of their opponents. Others shook their heads as if to regretfully concede that in a fallen world institutional *realpolitik* is simply and sadly inevitable.

In the end, some felt vindicated and some felt defeated. Some did, indeed, gain organizational power, and some lost. Unquestionably, feelings were hurt and relationships were damaged, perhaps irreparably. All (at least I hope so) felt they were dirtied by the process, even if they believed their actions were necessary.

Underneath this and all conflicts lie questions even more ethically

fundamental than the very important particulars that are “debated” in any specific case and certainly that were raised with this organization. Should Christians “fight back” – not “may” they, but “must” they? When is a position so righteous that it warrants fighting – to whatever extent (be that non-violent coercion or actual violence)? Should they “stand their ground” or “not leave an organizational (or geopolitical) vacuum?” When should injury be accepted for the sake of the Kingdom? When should wrongs be borne for the sake of one’s own character?¹ When should Christians have an attitude that they should “win” even if winning is predicated on the destruction (physical, emotional, economic, organizational or even spiritual) of others? To what extent should Christians engage in politics – in their own institutions, among social groups, in society at-large? Does Christian faith really impact the way people pick sides, argue, and fight? Does it matter if that conflict is occurring within the Christian community as opposed to the “world”?

A Simple Categorization of the Current Literature

This is not a new genre of questions for believers; it has clearly been with us since the beginning of Christendom and was raised before that while the Church was yet a marginalized religious community. And, of course, one of the moral epistemological problems for the resolution of such concerns is that the New Testament is not explicit, or at least not exclusively so, on what the Church and individual believers should do to promote social justice, generally, and to positively impact organizations and governments, more specifically. Recently, there has been a growing effort within the body of believers to grapple again with these questions, seeking an answer applicable for this era. In fact, the writings seem to be pouring off the presses (or electronically shot through the ether).

The following, then, is not a synopsis of all that has been produced nor even a review of the field. Rather, it is a sampling that, hopefully, shows the various directions that authors seem to be taking and, as such, an opportunity to suggest that two foundational questions are being too often unaddressed by most of these authors. While of course boundaries are fuzzy and distinctions less and less clear the closer one looks, generally it seems that works are coming from four broad groups: Mainline Protestants (almost inevitably on the political Left), those who have withdrawn from Christianity or strongly reject it on the basis of the preferability of philosophical secularism (generally on the political Left, but more focused on the exclusion of Christians on the basis of their supposed irrationality), Catholic writings (from the political Left, the Right, and the Middle), evangelical writings (again, from the Left and the Right and in between, but primarily from right of political center). No doubt, legitimate criticisms

could be raised that the growing Eastern Orthodox Church presence in the U.S. is not included as a category, nor the numerous other non-Christian religious communities. Further, the categories are too broad, especially the one named “evangelical” which includes among others the Holiness, Fundamentalist, Pentecostal, and conservative Anabaptist traditions and these, while overlapping, have different social ethical tendencies. Only limited space can justify such, that and the desire to address the matter of Christian social engagement specifically as a Christian and for Christians. Most of the books considered are by single authors, with one particularly important work being an anthology, Sider and Knippers, *Toward and Evangelical Public Policy*.

A Cursory View of the Four Categories of Literature on Christian Social Engagement

Mainline Protestants have been addressing these questions at least since the American Christian peace movement of the early 20th century arose out of populist evangelicalism typified by William Jennings Bryan and was soon woven into the Social Gospel. Now, though mainliners now seem to be writing specifically in reaction to the real or imagined political presence of evangelicals.² Long having been legitmaters of and legitimated by denominational bureaucracies, the precipitous decline of the latter and rise to dominance within Protestantism of evangelicalism has drawn forth a variety of responses. The spectrum is wide, from those who warn against a coming eschatological disaster, bought on by conservative Christians with hands dripping with oil and blood, to those who recognize that doctrinally conservative congregations are growing because they meet some need, be it social or spiritual or something else, and want the same for the oldline. The best sources for these works are the oldline denominations themselves. For instances one can look at materials from Episcopal Church in America on the matter of homosexual practice (note, in particular, the blurring of the moral distinction between civil and ecclesial categories in consideration of the morality of civil protection/rights, civil marriage, and ordination for practicing homosexuals) or, though less overt, that available or recommended by the United Methodist Board of Church and Society material on the same issues. These reveal a core argument for active engagement of the church structures in critiquing the morality and changing the laws of civil governance.

The counter-arguments to this denominational advocacy have come in two forms, and the distinction is important to note: those who oppose the substance of the pro-ordination/pro-marriage denominational bureaucracy and those who question the organized church’s active participation in civil arguments. The former come from those who tend to advocate taking over the leadership of those denominations and are willing

to fight to do so. Tactically, this is a similar type of argument to that made by the current denominational leadership when it asserts that fighting for social issues is legitimate. The latter questioners tend to doubt that any ecclesial participation on the public square is right, either because they are strongly sectarian and favor some degree of societal withdrawal or because they favored a privatized version of American Protestantism.³

Another batch of books, articles and media commentary comes from those who, like some of the Mainliners, truly fear and/or hate evangelicals, but take their anti-advocacy stand without a strong religious self-identification of their own or assume an explicitly non-orthodox Christian position. While one is tempted to offer psychological and spiritual interpretations of their vexation (maybe some of their parents really were psychotic abusers who justified their cruelty with toxic religiosity), a more appropriate explanation can be drawn from sociology (using the very same class-structure arguments that in a watered-down form underlie so much of their own work). Evangelicals are challenging the cultural elite's power, and the latter do not like it a bit. And, evangelicalism, it turns out, is not an opiate of the masses but human growth hormone for those that these elite deem obviously intellectually inferior (a bit of Social Darwinism almost always gets tossed into the mix). "They" (in their commentaries, evangelicals are rarely described in terms of citizens with a right to appear unfettered on the public square) have to be controlled. Seemingly panicky advocates for absolute separation not only of church and state, but church and culture, these writers and speakers appear to be as fearful of evangelicals as the evangelicals of years past were of dancing at weddings and wine at meals.⁴

For instance, a book like Joel Kilpatrick's *A Field Guide to Evangelicals and Their Habitat* (2006) elicits from its target audience more nervous laughter of the fearful than satiric chuckling of the wise. His chapter on civic engagement is entitled "The Diversity of Evangelical Politics — From Right-Wing to Wacko." But it would be wrong to use such an extreme example as typical of the type. Works by K. Phillips (*American Theocracy*) and Michelle Goldberg (*Kingdom Coming*) are intellectual efforts directed at policy makers, warning them to be careful. They echo the same near-paranoid fearfulness, crying for answers to evangelicals and their seeming commitment to engage on the public square. A recent *New York Times* 'op/ed' piece put it well: "A deeper and far more unsettling answer [to secularized cultural elites] is that the popularity of the current counterattack on religion cloaks a renewed and intense anxiety within secular society that it is not the story of religion but rather the story of the Enlightenment that may be more illusory than real."⁵ Still, as noted by both P. Dodd and by R. Douthart, these anti-evangelical works are analytically weak in a variety of ways, especially in their lack of sociological understanding of the

diversity among evangelicals, they nonetheless should not be entirely ignored by Believers for some of the criticisms are far too true of at least segments of the evangelical religious movement.⁶

At the edge of the anti-evangelical writings, and really outside the category, are those authors who want to distance themselves from a particular religion in the political realm, while encouraging personal, privatized religious practice with only vague expressions on the public square. Religion in general, they argue, provides a template or foundation for the moral shaping necessary for civic engagement. This is not a new argument, but rather echoes Locke and Thomas More. An effective piece at this boundary (one that attempts to be respectful of “religious” people while being all but dismissive of the exclusive claims of Christianity or, for that matter, Judaism and Islam) is Jonathan Miller’s *The Compassionate Community: Ten Values to Unite America*. Contrary to the anti-faith books that dominate this category, this is a book that may find greater acceptance among evangelicals and other Christians, though not written by one of them. Miller is Jewish (Reformed) and he uses Old Testament/Hebrew Scripture stories and commonalities with the teachings of Jesus, as well as using other sources, as a means to “reclaim” religious vocabulary for Democrats.⁷

Miller, of course, is not trying to connect with distinctly evangelical values, but rather to resurrect what used to be called the Judeo-Christian ethic. Essentially, his is an argument for middle axioms (shared moral values based on very different religious/philosophical foundations).⁸ It is something akin to the civil religion described by Bellah and others, though with greater intention on promoting a set of general values and less presumption that these are already held and functioning among most of the populace.⁹ His is a coherent argument and one that may appeal to those evangelicals who reject the various Reconstructionist positions.¹⁰ It has the distinct advantage of allowing social cooperation without requiring shared religion. Having said this, it is also true that evangelicalism is notably pragmatic and if ethical arguments yield moral positions that consistently correspond too closely to social issue positions acceptable to the left-wing of the Democratic Party, it is safe to say the work will be ignored or at least treated with suspicion. As with Wallis in the evangelical camp and Drinnan in the Catholic, it sounds different than so-called ‘secular humanism’ at first, but it may not be in civic practice (especially on the key evangelical social issues of abortion and what are called ‘family values’). Miller’s position on abortion and homosexual behavior may be problematic for more politically engaged evangelicals, though they seem to generally correspond with the cautiousness of most so-called ‘southern Democrats’ and may not be an insurmountable barrier to a hearing of his arguments

(nor his election, as the book seems to be tied to his testing the water for a run in the Kentucky gubernatorial election).

A third batch of books is coming from Catholic writers. Of course, American Catholicism and its understanding(s) of church-state-culture interface has gone through a lot of changes over the past 100 years, with urban Catholic authors identifying with European immigrants and the labor movement in the early part of the 20th century to those in the mid-century who took strong anti-Communist stands, to the materials coming out from U.S. Bishops and schools during and following Vatican II to the liberationists' American interpreters in the 70s, through Pope John Paul II. Now, there is a pope, Benedict XVI (Ratzinger), who, as an example, strongly suggested prior to his ascent to the papacy that American Christians consider a candidate's position on prolife issues when voting for or against that person, especially if s/he claimed to be Catholic.¹¹

Catholic authors write from the far Left, the far Right (especially on abortion related topics), and everywhere in between. Importantly, and regardless of significant variation on particular issues (including the extent to which Catholics should politically cooperate with evangelicals), the vast majority of American Catholics seem to write from a position that the Catholic Church is a competing denomination in the American religious marketplace or on the public square rather than the single authoritative voice to which the State must answer.¹² The strongest voice on the Right is that of *First Things* and its editors and various contributing authors.¹³ Two decades ago the strongest voice on the Left would have been from *The Catholic Worker*, but now it seems that the Catholic Left voices that are more likely to be heard in public and ecclesial debates come from inside the political establishment, with a good example of being the recent work of Drinnan.

R. Drinnan's work, *Can God and Caesar Coexist?: Balancing Religious Freedom and International Law* (2004). Drinnan is a Jesuit professor and former Democratic congressman, who seems to believe in the capacity of humans to develop formal structures that will genuinely improve the human condition. Today's evangelicals – at least those who are not vigorous Dispensationalists – will agree, as would have the majority of those “awakened” during the Great Awakening or in the Wesleyan Revivals of the 18th century as well as revivalist evangelicals in the 19th century. But, Drinnan seems far more hopeful about the extent of this capacity of government (in this case, international “governments”) than the average evangelical (or one suspects the average American). Ironically, what is missing in Drinnan's work, as in evangelical Left writings, is an honest consideration of what it means to be religious and to hold political power. They recognize the risks in their political opponents, but do not seem

clear that some of the same critiques might be true for them were they in control. "Is it an unrealistic dream," he asks, "to think that if the world guaranteed the free exercise of religion, the family of nations could live together in harmony?"¹⁴ This is not based in either Thomistic natural law or Lockean-Jeffersonian social contract theory. There is a difference between hope based in the Gospel or restraints based on a checks-and-balance system of power and 1930's pacifistic or 1960's wishfulness.¹⁵ Certainly, Christian child-like innocence is not the same as childish foolishness or ignorance of the potential for human sin; each Christian is, after all, to be "as wise as a serpent" as well as "innocent as a dove" (MT 10:16). Neither the State nor some international Super-State (especially one that does not seriously seek to protect the rights of individuals nor operate democratically – national regimes vote in the U.N., not their citizens) can make people good, though such may restrain evil and thus provide opportunities for being good. Writing as a true insider, Drinnan attempts to justify support for various international laws that will provide religious freedom apparently on the basis of mere social pressure rather than strong coercion. This less violent alternative is worth positing as more a proportionate response to oppression or as one more likely to succeed; some such international changes might help (though one suspects a great deal less than he hopes).

Drinnan is a difficult read for evangelicals (and, one would guess, a great many Roman Catholics) because of what come across as fundamental flaws exposed by examples used. For instance, he simultaneously asserts that polygamy is wrong, even if by personal religious choice, while calling for the acceptance of homosexual marriage (or perhaps even its endorsement) as a matter of religious tolerance.¹⁶ Still, while inconsistent and selective in what values and moral positions he thinks everyone should "tolerate," Drinnan does properly note that there have to be limits, for the sake of justice, to the power of States and Super-States. Societies are strongest when they maximize freedom while not falling into a moral subjectivity (the latter simply cannot serve as the basis for social order).¹⁷ The question remains as to when and how to draw the line between essential values and the need for toleration of cultural and personal difference.

A final group of books and commentaries are coming from evangelicals, in particular those living in the U.S. While most writing is directed to "the flock," the material is being produced with greater academic acumen and with an intensified belief that evangelicals have a "place" in the broader civic debates than the majority of that written fifty or even twenty-five years ago. Perhaps this is sign of organizational maturity for evangelicalism, or a return to the confidence that existed in its mid-19th century social morality.¹⁸ Perhaps it comes from anger over seven and a half decades of

marginalization, mocked by the cultured elites or deemed throw-backs by those envisioning a secular city, poor prophets they. Or, perhaps, it is generated by those who see themselves as “evangelical, but not ...” (fill in just about any term) and believe they must “speak up.” The latter are persons who want to describe evangelical alternatives that are not Republican, are not Mainline Protestant, are not anti-American, and/or are not collapsed into American patriotism. Perhaps, also, authors are writing and commentators are speaking because they want to recruit fellow believers for their socio-political causes. If the Carter campaign for the Democrats, the 1994 Congressional campaign for the Republicans, and perhaps the 2006 performance of the Democrats demonstrate nothing else, they show that U.S. evangelicals have moral positions that can be translated into votes – a lot of votes – but only if their “issues” are addressed in campaigning, in office, and, to some extent at least, in the personal behavior of the politicians.¹⁹

A publication like G. Hunter’s *Christian, Evangelical, and Democrat* (2006) falls into the “... evangelical, but not...” sub-category. Though it includes a healthy degree of suspicion about both political parties, it is an effort to persuade believers to act and to explain to non-evangelicals that one can be a believer and not a Religious Right Republican. An older book by J. Wallis, *The Soul of Politics: A Practical and Prophetic Vision for Change* (1994/1995) is a more definitive case of the “evangelical, but not” type. In it Wallis presents the theological and more or less pragmatic reasons for stepping back from simple partisanship. Unfortunately, he then offers examples that strongly favor Democratic policy while only weakly noting the need for identifying with any position that might be described as broadly Republican (a fairly tepid opposition to outlawing abortion on demand, for instance). Wallis seems to want the evangelism/political activism balance of C. Finney, the dominant leader of both 19th century antebellum evangelicalism and of the abolitionist movement, but unlike Finney – because of emphasis and examples in the writing – will not likely find great acceptance among the vast majority of evangelicals. Perhaps in response to such criticism, Wallis, with C. Gutenson, has published *Living God’s Politics: A Guidebook to Putting Your Faith into Action* (2006) which does seem to return Wallis more clearly to his much earlier distinct position as critic of “both” sides while still asking for socio-political engagement from believers, though still with little of the spiritual conversionist (as distinguished from political evangelism) fervor that allowed Finney to have his social morality claims heard in the faith community. Connection with the broader evangelical community, though, remains doubtful.²⁰ At times he still comes across as highly valuing alliances with persons “inside the Beltway” and with the well-heeled leaders of various constituency groups.

Maybe that is politically necessary, but, all particular moral issues aside, as some Republican politicians came to understand in 2006, that does not fit well with the underlying populism (read: “small town” attitudes) of American evangelicalism.²¹

R. Balmer and D. Kuo write as evangelicals. Balmer asserts in *Thy Kingdom Come* a sort of anti-advocacy (to coin a word) against an evangelical-Republican alliance. His assertion that environmental issues may be a crack in that seeming alliance seems more accurate than some on the Right may want to accept, at least among those evangelicals not strongly enamored with extreme Dispensationalist theology. Along the same line, inappropriate personal moral behavior, according to evangelical standards, by Republican office holders may cause division or, more likely, cause some evangelicals “to stay home” unless they are genuinely antagonized by the opposing candidates. Kuo in *Tempting Faith* cannot quite decide if evangelicals have been betrayed by the current Republican leadership and that is correctable or if Christians should avoid getting their hands dirty with politics period. Good questions are raised; indeed, he raises one of the two most important questions about Christian political activity – “should Christians be engaged in the political process?” And, he speaks as an insider, but clarity in the argument is lacking. What is readily noticeable about these and other books like them is that they are offered primarily for advocacy for non-Right positions, but also, unlike those on the evangelical Left, seem to have an evangelistic purpose in that they tell those on the secularized Left that one can be a Believer without conceding to the politics of the Religious Right.

Books that are evangelical and clearly Republican are more numerous and, as one would suspect, more often seem to target a specific evangelical political sub-group. Generally these are less intellectually challenging works, or more accurately, tend to be simpler, favoring dualistic categorical political thinking. This is not because those on the evangelical Left are superior thinkers, but because much of the foundational theoretical work for evangelicals engaging in political discourse and generally siding with the Right was built by Francis Schaeffer, John Stott, and C.S. Lewis a quarter century or more ago.²² Democrats and others who want to defend a non-Right evangelical perspective have to be more intentionally nuanced given the last 30 years of American politics. They have to theologically and ethically explain why an evangelical Christian would or could hold a Leftist position, given the assumption (by both those on the political Right and the Left) that conservatives need not provide such for their position. If this were the time of Charles Grandison Finney or of William Jennings Bryan, the opposite would have been true – but, this is neither of those times.

Follow-up and alternative theoretical work on the Right is not lacking, though; having been performed by C. Colson and evangelicals writing in the Catholic journal *First Things* and the evangelical periodical *Books and Culture*.²³ Additional critiques, variously distanced from socio-political identification with “evangelicalism” and / or social conservatism have been effectively offered by Marsden, Bethke Elshtain, and Noll among others.

Importantly, some excellent sociological works have been produced that are challenging the easy assumptions about evangelicals and politics. For a portrayal of the evangelical movement and its interaction(s) with the society, one is better served turning to sociology than to polemicists, of either camp. To be blunt, the simplistic portrayals of the movement, including its politics, are often overly general and not infrequently wrong. Specifically the work by A. Greeley and M. Hout that uses General Social Survey data to describe, as the title says, *The Truth about Conservative Christians*, is a clear, though unavoidably (given the breadth of the movement) broad sociological description. The use of denominations in some of the analysis conceals, to some degree, the strength of religious faith and the tendency for that faith to be evangelical among a substantial number of those who are officially members of oldline Protestant denominations. Still, it is not a major concern. Works by J.D. Hunter, C. Smith, N. Ammerman, R. Wuthnow and W. Roof should also be examined.²⁴ In addition, P. Berger’s responses in journals, interviews, and books to caricatures of evangelicalism and how it functions in society serve as important correctives to the casual generalization.²⁵ None of these sociologists are clearly identified with evangelicalism, though some do self-identify as Christians.²⁶

A Model for Understanding Evangelical Socio-Political Engagement

The church’s role in society can be crossed with the actual political power of the church to locate the civic engagement of evangelicals. Using the Troeltsch Church-Sect model against a simply dichotomy of having or not having the power to genuinely influence politics, a typology for understanding the various declarations by and about evangelicals on the Public Square can be constructed.²⁷ Troeltsch describes the State Church (in his work simply called “church,” but modified here for clarity), the Sect, and the Privatized Syncretist (in Troeltsch’s terms, the “mystic”; again for purposes of clarity, modified here). To these three was added the Denomination.

The State Church in Troeltsch’s model has low membership qualifications, but makes claims to uniqueness in society. Arguably, the civil religion of the U.S. past may have come close this, but a clearer example is the Church of England in that country. If the State Church has a dominant

presence, then it is Theocratic.²⁸ Arguably the Church of England in the 16th century bordered on this once Henry VIII obtained power over it and certainly took that form under the Protectorate. The current Church of England, on the other hand, is fairly unimportant politically and can be called “Nominal.” Within the broad category of evangelicals, Reconstructionists do seem to want theocracy. However, the term is most often applied by opponents and clearly is not indicative of any significant portion of U.S. evangelicalism.

The “Denomination” was added, given the American Protestant spectrum, by H.R. Niebuhr to Troeltsch’s model; it is a church with membership qualifications and with a weak or no claim to uniqueness in spiritual authority. The Methodist Episcopal Church of the early 20th century was a Denomination with a strong political presence (as its building, designed to house the M.E. Board of Temperance, Prohibition and Public Morals, located between the Supreme Court and Capital as the only private building on Capital Hill indicates) and can be called a “Public Church.”²⁹ Currently, the United Methodist Church is a Denomination with a leadership that is generally ignored by its dwindling membership and can be deemed “Marginal.” Many evangelical leaders do want their congregations to be “Public Churches.” This is true of the Christian Coalition, on the Right, and of Sojourners, on the Left. Public Churches do differentiate between faith and civic actions, and so will seek moral change through government but not spiritual change which is reserved for the Church. One argument within this category of evangelicals is whether the congregation as a group or only individual believers should have a public political presence. The Public Church model clearly dominates the writings of evangelical authors across the political spectrum.

The Troeltschian Sect has high membership expectations and claims exclusivity, and is in tension with or at least dramatically different than the culture and the civic powers. A Sect that wants to change society while maintaining its uniqueness is “Purifying,” such as the Salvation Army. A group that does not want to engage society politically (though it may economically and otherwise) is “Distinct,” with the Amish being the best example. Historically, evangelicals in the 19th century wanted to be Public but in the early 20th shifted over to Purifying or, more often, Distinct. As an example, it seems the Sojourners Movement was originally Sectarian but has become increasingly Denominational, while keeping its strong interest in influencing the State.

Currently, the vast majority of American evangelicals assume some validity to the American Social Contract, though they do not choose to interpret that contract in identical ways. Some prefer an expansive version that includes positive rights (rights of entitlement), while others tend to

more strictly favor an all but exclusively negative rights, limited government version. The former argue for the need to publicly care, including through government institutions, while the latter fear government intrusion, especially into religious practice. Most evangelicals actually seek a more moderated role for the state than that advocated by 19th century U.S. revivalism (which on most social issues was what would today be called “Left”) or by Reconstructionism (which is far more “Right”). Both of those forms tend toward moral triumphalism which can hardly be considered a Christian virtue and which, contrary to what some high-profile evangelicals advocated in the 1980’s and which leftist anti-evangelical critics lift up for fund-raising efforts today, is simply not typical of American evangelicals generally.

Troeltsch has another category, the Privatized Syncretist (Mystic), who is an individual with high religious experience, but without claims to unique authority for others and without any strong organizational affiliation. The best current example is what is called “New Age” and marked by declarations like: “I’m spiritual, but not religious.” Among evangelicals this is not prevalent, but is not absent either. A noticeable number do not have specific church affiliations and a substantial number of those tend to describe their religion in therapeutic terms. If a Privatized Syncretist is politically active s/he can be called “Activist Therapeutic;” if not, then “Disengaged Therapeutic.”

	State Church	Denomination	Sect	Privatized Syncretists
Central	Theocracy	Public	Purifying	Activist Therapeutic
Peripheral	Nominal	Marginal	Distinct	Disengaged Therapeutic

Modified from Thobaben, 1997

Alternatives to the Typical Denominational Model of the Public Church

Generally, American evangelicals argue for a strong participation by the individual in public political discourse (though the actual participation may not match the rhetoric) and for some degree (though the exact extent varies significantly) of ecclesial organizational participation. Two questions, though, must be asked (and should be by all commentators writing as or to evangelicals); first, “Should Christians participate in politics as individuals and/or organizations at all?” While similar questions are asked by secularists, they do so out of fear and their own intellectual inadequacy. Christians should ask the question as Gospel ethics. The second question is, “If so, how?”

The Mainline denominations, when they were the Mainline, had

centralized authority and were engaged with political powers; and, they had a large, growing membership. Back then, the central authorities allied strongly with various political groups. The clergy tended to agree but with less vehemence. The laity, more or less, would follow. Now, these denominations have a membership that ignores the leadership or is angered by their politics and the younger clergy are rebelling against the leaders or simply affiliating with other denominational groups. The organizational decline has been stunning. Evangelicalism may be on a similar trajectory: vocal national leadership, with local leaders who tend to agree but not with the same fervor, and laity that may or may not go along. Currently there is a tendency for U.S. evangelicals, at least those who are Anglo/white to agree with their national leadership on social issues, but it may weaken as evangelicals become, using Troeltschian/Niebuhr categories, less Sectarian and more Denominational in thinking.

Three arguments from the past are being currently re-presented as alternatives to politically assertive, centralized, religious organizations that seek influence (Public Churches or Purifying Churches) in civic debates and, to a lesser extent, influencing the votes of their own congregants. One option is the freedom of religious conscience (as personal expressions of social Christianity) model, drawn from Roger Williams (17th century) and explicated by C. Davis. Another is the pillar model based on the theoretical work of Kuyper (early 20th century), described and expanded by V. Bacote. A third position is that held by conservative Anabaptists and being raised in a highly modified form by Yoder and Hauerwas.

Yoder and Hauerwas both emphasized that the central moral issue for Christians is not what the State should look like, but what the Church should look like. Throughout their writings they assert that Christians can engage politically only as a community that is, before being concerned with candidates and votes, shaping itself as a community of character – with that character being distinctly and (arguably) uniquely Christian. Neither Yoder nor Hauerwas, though, satisfactorily explain when sufficient character is present to allow engagement. Traditional conservative Anabaptist thought has discouraged any formal civic political participation because (a) the primary ministry of the Church to the world is through its example, (b) because the World is contaminating, and (c) because living in the Church and dealing with its internal politics is hard enough for the Believer. As one of the few prolific Amish authors has put it, “Our participation in politics is as a light to the World.”³⁰ The one consistent way that those holding separatist positions can participate is through service outreach and, though not the Amish, evangelism.

Kuyper’s pillar model allows some degree of separatism, while still encouraging political participation on matters of common concern.

Bacote's work on Kuyper is academically focused, but with a political purpose. Bacote refers to his project as a work in "systematic theology, the discipline that attempts to interpret and articulate meaning, coherence, and implications of Christian claims [drawing on] other disciplines such as historical theology, philosophy, and biblical studies."³¹ Curiously, he leaves out of his list sociology and Christian ethics which may merely be an oversight, a hint of an institutional turf battle, or indicate an emphasis on deduction over inductive and synthetic approaches ("... but is distinct from them in its aim to present a synthetic, coherent, and contemporary picture of the faith").³² If either of the latter two, this is an unnecessary assertion of grandeur for a sub-field of religious studies or theology or whatever term one prefers that is unneeded. Having made this unnecessary claim, Bacote actually uses well material from a variety of fields that intersect at the crossroads of human political engagement.

Kuyper's pillars are presented as a way for cooperation on the most fundamental concerns of society, while leaving the majority of value-based decisions to be decided, including how they will be institutionalized, by defined sub-sets of society.³³ One might think of this, using Catholic thought, as a version of subsidiarity or (to use more recent language) mediating institutions.³⁴ Or, those familiar with Walzer could think of the approach as spheres with some but limited interaction, though instead of differentiation by characteristics of exchange (economic sphere, political sphere, religious sphere, etc.) the distinguishing characteristic is the set of core values (Protestant Christian, Roman Catholic Christian, Sunni Muslim, secular humanist, etc.).³⁵ Using the above-mentioned examples, it would be conceivable under such a model that homosexual marriage might be tolerated by a certain group, but not by others. Abortion, to the contrary, would become a morally and, finally, legally prohibited act on the grounds that all persons should be protected by the state and that the values of sub-sets of society cannot override the foundational values of the state. To be simplistic, there is clear distinction, strong though limited separation, and cooperation on core values of the State.

An extreme version of this could certainly be called "Balkanization." However, that branding would both disregard the theoretical limits Kuyper places on non-cooperation and the historical evidence from the Netherlands where Kuyper was Prime Minister in the first decade of the 20th century. Further, in the U.S., this tempered differentiation has occurred and without any severe problems with various evangelical Christian schools, recreational opportunities, etc. as well as equivalents among Catholics and the smaller Islamic and Jewish communities. The fact that these have been sustained among Catholics and Jews almost a century after the largest wave of immigration to the U.S. is also significant, as is the typically higher academic

performance of these schools and their success at producing “citizens.” In a way, Bacote’s Kuyperism is a milder version of Anabaptist spiritual separation, but with the understanding that the thin, broader social order must be protected by Believers as well as those of the World. For comparison, Woltestorff seems to endorse a version of the Kuyperian model, while very explicitly asserting it cannot go too far toward Anabaptist-like separation.³⁶

Bacote’s theological argument for advocating a version of Kuyperian socio-political order rests on the fact, according to Calvinism (and shared by many non-Calvinist evangelicals as well), that creation clearly bears the mark of its Creator, and that the created moral order is observable by all competent adults, at least to some significant extent. Perhaps differentiating it from some of the traditional understandings of Catholic natural law, Bacote argues that the Holy Spirit is still very engaged in an on-going creative engagement with the World, as well as the Community of Believers. Or, as Bacote nicely puts it, a public theology must address the fact that there is “divine involvement in the world ‘already made’ and the subsequent human response of engagement and development.”³⁷ One would wish that this activity of the Holy Spirit would not almost always be referred to as “preserving” in that sometimes it is very intentionally a directing Spirit.³⁸ The most noted Arminian, J. Wesley used a similar argument, though claiming that the “prevenient” activity of the Spirit does not merely restrain evil, but advocates among humans for the accomplishment of the not-yet-existing good. Bacote, perhaps out of an aversion to “open theology” or “process theology,” clearly asserts that the Creation from the hand of the Creator contains the potential for development, in particular for human beings and their societies (and, interestingly, cites Pinnock in support).³⁹

A voice from the more distant past, but one that might be more “tolerable” (word choice is intentional) to American Christians functioning under the U.S. social contract is the social ethics of Williams, excellently presented by James Calvin Davis in *The Moral Theology of Roger Williams*. Davis’s book is strongly academically focused, but does include advocacy for a contemporary application of Williams by evangelicals. Williams stands as a strong, orthodox believer who refused to force civically unnecessary Christian moral positions on those who, though they might personally benefit, could function in society without them. His stand was simultaneously against the spiritual decadence of theocracy and against the denial of individual responsibility for proper moral behavior.

Davis correctly points out that, contrary to how he is often portrayed, Williams was not some late modern relativist who thought all moral positions were equally valid and that each individual should decide in

accordance with his/her own feelings. “Popular lore casts Roger Williams in the role of agnostic seeker...”⁴⁰ In reality, Williams was located as a tolerating Puritan between the restrictive Puritans, personified in John Cotton, and the Quakers. “Williams did not come to his principles regarding religious liberty and separation of church and state by rejecting Puritan orthodoxy [but] precisely through the lens of Puritan beliefs...”⁴¹ Williams came out of exile, literally, as one committed to toleration that nonetheless required social engagement and cooperation. His argument for coincidence of the Christian understanding of conscience and the American tradition of freedom (as negative rights, specifically the right to freedom of religion and conscience) serves as an alternative to theological liberalism’s failed vision of an earthly Kingdom, and the current advocacy by some on the Right for a “Christian nation.”

Is There a Common Christian Morality of Civic Participation?

A few problems arise with almost every one the works read for this sampling of the field. They all stake out some position on the American political spectrum, but do not all properly address why and how Christians engage in conflict. To use traditional just coercion theory, this is the distinction between the justice of entering a particular conflict or any conflict (*jus ad bellum*) and how one “fights” (*jus in bello*) Two questions illuminate particular concerns.

The first question, too often ignored in these works, centers on whether or not Christians should be on the public square fighting over what they are fighting over. The vast majority of these works do not carefully address the non-participation position offered by historic Anabaptists and those in stricter subsets of the Wesleyan-Holiness, Baptist, and Pentecostal movements. Separatists, be they true pacifists or those who hesitatingly accept a just war ethic, avoid civic participation if for no other reason than to eliminate or minimize the problem of “dirty hands” (using more recent ethical language). The question can be applied to any community, even congregations and Christian organizations.

Every Christian author on social ethics should acknowledge and, at least to some extent, address this position. It is absolutely not the pacifism of the mid-20th century oldlines, but is separatism first, with non-cooperation as avoidance of the instruments of the World. This would include limiting, to the extent reasonably possible, worldly models in the governance of Christians social groups. Counter-arguments can be made. For instance, no one entering civic or organizational politics can remain undirtied, but one can remain unstained. Further, to ignore injustice or morally misdirected leadership can be even more ethically contaminating. The question will not be resolved today to everyone’s satisfaction anymore

than it was during the Reformation between Luther, Calvin, Zwingli, and Grebel and his spiritual descendents, but it cannot be dismissed.

But, a second closely related question that is also ignored can and should be addressed and a common answer sought by all Believers. The question is simple: regardless of the extent of participation in political activities, how should Christians act while when they disagree over the actions of a family, an organization, or a state – any socially organized group?

The morality of those in civic discourse is, unavoidably, dirtied, by the expediency required for political compromise and winning in social conflict. This can impact the Believer's virtuosity if not done with great care and humility. Christian character matters and concern for one's personal imitation of Christ should condition, that is limit, one's socio-political behavior. After all, there is absolutely no New Testament teaching that would lead one to conclude that full engagement in the political process is a higher priority than one's following and imitating of Jesus in daily life. Absolutely none.

A few books address the question of character directly. As an example, Alan Stokely, in his work *Jesus and Politics: Confronting the Powers*, provides an excellent overview of the interaction of politics and religion in the time of Jesus. He correctly points out that Christians attempting to follow Christ in how they live out Christianity in a political world should "avoid some of our own Western cultural assumptions" and recognize that to Jesus' contemporaries "religion and politics [were] integral because God's purposes relate to the nation."⁴² Today, God's purposes still relate to the nation, but the nation and the religion and the individual relate to each other in very different ways than they did 2000 years ago. The priority for the evangelical must always be on the changed individual, not the politics of the State or the religious organization. It may well be, that the individual is called to participate personally, organizationally, or socio-politically, but it matters at the most basic level how one participates.⁴³

All of which leads back to that institution of which I am a part. It is a Sectarian group, or at least used to be. Typical of many evangelical organizations, it is marked by doctrinal orthodoxy that now draws in many who are "middle of the road" and increasingly feel abandoned by oldline groups that have abdicated their responsibility to declare and live historical Christianity. All in this organization relish the expanded call, but disagree how that calling should be expressed in the broader society. Some still favor Sectarianism, with that group being divided between a "Distinct" near-disregard for the politics of civil society and those who want to raise high a "Purity" standard for the world to see and be shamed by. A growing group, though, is much Denominational in the Troetschian sense. They are less strict/rigid in personal behavior and in doctrine. They want to be a

“Public” church – some asserting the organization should be more socio-politically Right and some more Left. Usually there is great civility even while the various American political positions are strongly expressed. Yet, recently “parties” have formed over an internal “political” disagreement. Sadly, there has been little consideration of the virtuosity of behavior to which Believers are called, regardless of how they may disagree over socio-political or organizational politics.

The most basic moral concern for the Believer who chooses to engage in politics at any level, one that must take priority over any specific political conflict, is how s/he will live the life of Christ, how his/her character will manifest that of the God Who came to earth as a Servant in service to others. Taking sides in a political fight never matters as much as whether one is first and foremost imitating the Christ by the power of His Holy Spirit. In that organization, during those early days of the organizational fight, that was simply not the case.

Notes

1. Sidney Callahan, “To Bear Wrongs Patiently,” in *With All Our Heart and Mind* (Crossroad, 1988)

2. The last dominant figure to hold together pacifism (or an inclination toward it), social engagement, and evangelicalism was William Jennings Bryan. There is no little irony in the efforts of Oldline denominations to lay claim, albeit weakly as far as the evangelism component, to his heritage when it was their intellectual parents with highly secularized cultural elite friends who heckled Bryan, perhaps, to death. Specifically, in the misinterpretation of what he was asserting during the Scopes Trial, Bryan was portrayed as an anti-science hick, when he was actually concerned with the implications of Social Darwinism and atheism, not with scientific claims nor the age of the earth. His own fault lay in his misreading of the culture; it had changed from small-town populism to the cynicism of the urbane urbans.

3. The use of the term “public square” for discussions of religious practice and morality in public settings was made popular recently by Richard John Neuhaus, both through a book and an on-going column.

4. The recent midterm elections may temper this anxiety – both because of the Democratic Party gains and possibly an unwillingness of white middle-class evangelicals to unreservedly show up at the polls and vote Republican. Maybe.

5. Richard A Shweder, “Atheists Agonistes” *New York Times* 27 November 2006.

6. Patton Dodd, “Culture Warriors United: What the Anti-Religious Right Books Get Wrong, and Why Evangelicals Should Read Them Anyway,” *BeliefNet* http://www.beliefnet.com/story/200/story_20024_1.html (posting date not given)

Ross Douthat, “Theocracy, Theocracy, Theocracy,” *First Things* August/ September 2006 (23-30); <http://www.firstthings.com/ftissues/ft0607/articles/douthat.html>

7. Jonathan Miller, *The Compassionate Community: Ten Values to Unite America*, Palgrave Macmillan, New York, 2006.

“Every election we get the Democrats writing off half the country to focus on 20 states to try to pull together the electoral map,” Miller said. “Not every evangelical is following Jerry Falwell or Pat Robertson and not every Jew is wanting to take God out the Pledge of Allegiance.... It’s stereotypes on both sides we need to tear down.” (as quoted in: Jennifer Siegel, “Bible-toting Bluegrass Boychick Eyes Kentucky Governor’s Mansion” *Jewish Daily Forward* 15 December 2006, <http://www.forward.com/articles/bible-toting-bluegrass-boychick-eyes-kentucky-gove>)

Interestingly, Miller's book has an afterword by Al Gore and an endorsement by Tony Campolo on the cover. On the publisher's website an endorsement by Bob Edgar, General Secretary, National Council of Churches sits alongside one from Senator Joe Lieberman.

8. The term "middle axiom" was apparently coined by J. H. Oldham, but was made popular among ethicists by John C. Bennett (*Christian Ethics and Social Policy*). For Bennet, a middle axiom is a provisional value or moral position. The term "middle axiom" though, has come to mean an intermediate position, almost like the ethical equivalent of an Aristotelian middle term in logic, that allows discussion of moral concerns among those who do not share common foundational values.

9. Bellah has, since the original publication, significantly modified his position on "civil religion." The original argument, nonetheless, remains very influential. See: "Civil Religion in America" *Daedalus*, 1967.

10. Reconstructionism is the only truly theocratic argument made among evangelicals. Paradoxically, by taking the argument for the influence of Christianity in the political sphere to an extreme, the movement is actually anti-evangelistic. The pattern is not like the seeking of purity among Anabaptists, which in its extreme form with the Amish, becomes anti-evangelistic. The clearest arguments for Reconstructionism, which include a restoration of portions of Old Testament civil law, are found in Rushdoony. It is asserted by some Dominion theologians that Reconstructionism is not theocratic in an oppressive sense. A "softer" version of this theology (in post- and pre-millennial forms) influences the thinkers of the Religious Right.

11. "A Catholic would be guilty of formal cooperation in evil, and so unworthy to present himself for Holy Communion, if he were to deliberately vote for a candidate precisely because of the candidate's permissive stand on abortion and/or euthanasia. When a Catholic does not share a candidate's stand in favour of abortion and/or euthanasia, but votes for that candidate for other reasons, it is considered remote material cooperation, which can be permitted in the presence of proportionate reasons." Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, "*Worthiness to Receive Holy Communion: General Principles*" (June 2004) "*Catholic Culture*" http://www.catholicculture.org/docs/doc_view.cfm?DocNum=6041

12. The language of "public square" is used extensively by R. J. Neuhaus and others; the language of a religious and idea marketplace was used extensively by W. C. Roof and others.

13. A fine example recently published is: Robert P. George, "Public Morality, Public reason" *First Things* (167) November 2006 which considers specifically the moral reasonableness of prolife political advocacy.

14. Drinnan, p. 122.

15. The optimism of those eras did, indeed, facilitate a great deal of good, but finally required tempering with armed justice against the Fascists and Nazis in the 40's and with maturity as the wistfulness of the Baby Boomers morphed from the idealism of the 1960's through 1970's and 80's promiscuity and materialism.

16. Drinnan, pp. 137-9, 149.

17. Drinnan, p.144.

18. For the purposes of this review, the term "evangelical" refers to the movement (with its various components) that grew out of late 18th century Revivalism (specifically, the Wesleyan revivals and the Great Awakening, followed by the Wilderness Revivals/Second Great Awakening). Included as subsets of this category would be Fundamentalism, Pentecostalism, neo-Evangelicalism, the Charismatic Movement, etc., with the understanding that the lines between these groups have never been perfectly drawn and are becoming ever more permeable.

Unfortunately (and ironically given the history), few of the works surveyed sufficiently address the Wesleyan position. The closest is Stackhouse in Sider and Knippers, who mentions Wesley and refers to what is called the Wesleyan Quadrilateral. The article itself is excellent, but this is not an adequate understanding of Wesley's epistemology nor his ethical foundations. Bacote is very strong in his analysis of Kuyper, but the secondary-level reference to Stackhouse's reference to the Quadrilateral is not a sufficient description of what is arguably the most important religious social movement of the 18th century (even in what would become the U.S.,

Whitefield was a Calvinist “methodist”) and which was extraordinarily influential on Finney and other 19th century American abolitionists as well as the Booths in founding the Salvation Army.

19. While the material must be read with the understanding that the author(s) have a clear orientation away from / against several social values that are key to most U.S. evangelicals, the research led by Robert P. Jones, Ph.D., Director and Senior Fellow, Center for American Values in Public Life at People For the American Way Foundation is worth examining. Several of the studies conducted used variables that are often ignored in other surveys. Though the conclusions of the study are very much open to debate, the observation is useful to consider:

Our American Values Survey noted that when Americans “vote their values,” they primarily think about the honesty and integrity of the candidate (39 percent), protecting personal freedoms and individual choice (23 percent), and eliminating poverty and guaranteeing access to health care (21 percent). Only 12 percent of Americans think primarily about abortion and same-sex marriage when voting their values. This largely remains true for white evangelicals; four out of five evangelicals think primarily about something other than these hot-button issues when voting their values. (Robert P. Jones, “Exit Polls Show the Partisan ‘God Gap’ Cut in Half from 2004” People for the American Way Website, <http://www.pfaw.org/pfaw/general/default.aspx?oid=23047>)

20. A indicator of the practical, albeit not theoretical, attachment to the Democratic Party can be readily discerned in the HarperCollins advertisement for the book:

After fifteen weeks on the *New York Times* Bestseller list, *God’s Politics* not only changed the conversation about faith and politics in this country, it began a movement. All across the country, wherever Jim Wallis spoke, people were frustrated by tax cuts and budgets that widened the gap between rich and poor, aggravated by the government’s lack of response to natural disasters, wearied of misinformation and the ongoing war in the Middle East, and exasperated by the impractical political rhetoric about sexual abstinence in lieu of policies that would strengthen more broadly family values and community health. (HarperCollins Website, “Book Description” http://www.harpercollins.com/books/9780061118418/Living_Gods_Politics/index.aspx)

21. A good commentary on the democratic (note small “d”) tendencies of evangelicals as specifically manifested in their worship communities and the pragmatic entrepreneurialism of parachurch group leaders can be found in D. Michael Lindsay, “Elite Power: Social Networks within American Evangelicalism” *Sociology of Religion* (2006, 67: 207-227). Though Lindsay’s methodology does not properly account for the independent power within congregation nor the high fluidity at the boundaries of social power (specifically through authorship, videos, etc. and through “growing” a large church), it is still an excellent work.

While he occasionally uses vulgarities that unnecessarily alienate, the British / Irish musician Bono of U2 has recognized the need to tap into the leveling and populist tendencies of evangelicalism in order to speak to political and social issues, especially in the U.S.

22. Schaeffer probably would have disagreed with much that has been done politically by evangelicals in the Religious Right, still his core arguments presented in works such as *W/whatever Happened to the Human Race?* remain significant within the evangelical academia even if not formally cited. Simply, Schaeffer favors a distinctly Christian moral understanding that can, not in spite of but because of its unique foundation in Divine Truth, develop points of contract with those of the World on certain moral issues, including socio-political ones.

23. This is certainly not to imply that these two periodicals are propaganda organs of the Religious Right. Rather, they tend to advocate positions that coincide with positions held by the political right on social issues. There may be high variance with economic and foreign policy positions.

Further, *First Things* is edited by Richard John Neuhaus and articles often are written with an assumption of the Catholic notion of Natural Law. This is compatible with Calvinist General Revelation, which, in turn, is not entirely unlike historical Baptist, Pentecostal, and Wesleyan understandings of (to use the Wesleyan term) prevenient grace. The ethical arguments,

regardless of any epistemological and ontological disagreement, are very similar and the conclusions are often quite consistent with socially conservative evangelicalism.

24. Though some are dated, the following are quite useful:

J. D. Hunter, *Culture Wars: The Struggle to Define America*, (Basic Books, 1991).

J. D. Hunter *The Death of Character: Moral Education in an Age Without Good or Evil*, (Basic Books, 2000).

Christian Smith *Christian America? What Evangelicals Really Want*. (University of California Press, 2000).

Christian Smith (ed.) *The Secular Revolution: Power, Interests, and Conflict in the Secularization of American Public Life*. (University of California Press, 2003).

Ammerman, Nancy Tatom. *Pillars of Faith: American Congregations and their Partners* (University of California Press, 2005).

Wade Clark Roof and William McKinney, *American Mainline Religion: Its Changing Shape and Future* (Rutgers, 1987).

Robert Wuthnow *Rediscovering the Sacred: Perspectives on Religion in Contemporary Society* (Eerdman's, 1992).

Robert Wuthnow *The Struggle for America's Soul: Evangelicals, Liberals, and Secularism* (Eerdman's, 1989).

25. For instance, Berger succinctly presented his critique of the misrepresentations of evangelicalism on "Speaking of Faith," National Public Radio, 15 October 2006.

26. Virtually all sociologists of religion note the mastery of technology among evangelical leadership. It may be that all evangelicals reject some components of modernity if that term is understood as a narrow set of philosophical and ethical beliefs. On the other hand, some subsets of evangelicalism actually agree with portions of that philosophy, if not the ethics. Fundamentalists, as the best example, use reductionist reasoning as do advocates of scientism; they simply use different sets of data distinguished on the basis of an epistemological standard. More importantly, though, evangelicals in the broader sense (including Pentecostals, neo-evangelicals, etc.) have mastered not only technology, but also late modern organizational theory and technique. And, in comparison, it has surely been the organizational, and to a lesser degree the technological, incompetence of oldline groups like the UMC and Episcopal Church in America as much as doctrine and ethics that have led to precipitous decline and disavowal by the dynamically growing international churches of the same denominational families.

27. James R. Thobaben, "Ecclesiology and Covenant: Christian Social Institutions in a Pluralistic Society" *Living Responsibly in Community: Essays in Honor of E. Clinton Gardner* (ed. Frederick E. Glennon, Gary S. Hauk, and Darryl M. Trimiew), (Lanham, Maryland: University Press of America, 1997).

28. The term "theocracy" – as with many words borrowed for sociological typologies, can be defined in such a variety of ways that some might find the use here inappropriately broad. Nonetheless, it seems the best term to convey the basic concept. Perhaps the word "theonomy" (meaning "law of God orders or governs") would be better, but that is too strongly associated with the Reconstructionist / Dominion Theology Movement.

29. The term "Public Church" is popular with some in oldline denominations who seemingly long for the "good old days," but do not have any real civil political power over their congregants nor do political authorities pay them more than cursory attention.

30. David Kline, personal conversation in Holmes County, Ohio, August 2006.

31. Bacote, p. 15.

32. Bacote, p. 18.

33. The term "value-based decisions" is used here to avoid confusion. Evangelicals, of course, would agree with the vast majority of academic ethicists that laws are based on moral order. The term "morality," unfortunately, is often used in the popular press and among politicians to refer to professional codes or personal moral issues such as alcohol consumption,

sexual behavior. Abortion, to evangelicals is not a personal moral issue, but a matter of rights (though it has been historically associated with what evangelicals consider immoral sexual behavior).

34. The concept of mediating institutions / structures, while existing previously, was made popular as an analytical category by the publication of Peter L. Berger and Richard John Neuhaus, *To Empower People: the Role of Mediating Structures in Public Policy* in 1977 after they had abandoned Leftist politics in disillusionment. A second edition was published in 1996 which emphasizes that mediating institutions can be as bad as good, but some are necessary for proper social functioning (especially for the protection of rights).

35. Michael Walzer, *Spheres of Justice*. Kuyper also argued for this kind of sphere sovereignty along with the pillars, thus creating a social matrix.

36. Sider and Knippers, 141, 159.

37. Bacote, p. 17.

38. Bacote, p. 18.

39. Bacote, p. 18.

40. Davis, p. xi.

41. Davis, p. xi.

42. Stokely, pp. 37 & 38.

43. Though not specifically on the topic, a good recent work to examine is D. Kinlaw, *Let's Start With Jesus* (2005) on the matter of community and virtuosity.

Sarah Heaner LANCASTER

Dramatic Enactment of Christian Faith
A Review Essay

The Drama of Scripture: Finding Our Place in the Biblical Story

Craig G. Bartholomew and Michael W. Goheen

Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Academic

2004, 252 pp. paper, \$19.99

**Theology and the Drama of History, Cambridge Studies in
Christian Doctrine series**

Ben Quash

Cambridge: Cambridge University Press

2005, xiv, 235 pp. hardcover, \$75.00

**The Drama of Doctrine: A Canonical-Linguistic Approach to
Christian Theology**

Kevin J. Vanhoozer

Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster John Knox Press

2005, 488 pp. paper, \$39.95

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When Hans Frei published *The Eclipse of Biblical Narrative* in 1974, he described a situation which had become all too familiar to students of theology at the time. Historical criticism had held sway in biblical studies for many years, and it had determined the major options for reading the Bible. Whether conservative or liberal, scholars asked “what really happened” and tried to defend the Bible’s truth and unity with intellectual resources (such as history and philosophy) that were general studies not specifically related to the Bible itself. In this situation, Frei called for a shift in thinking, allowing the Bible itself to determine the proper approach for interpretation. He argued for a “narrative” reading of scripture that was suited to the kind of literature that the Bible itself is, as well as to the way that the community of ordinary Christians read it as scripture that witnesses to and enables them to encounter God.

Frei’s book broke ground for attention to narrative in biblical and theological study that has flourished since then in a variety of ways. Not only is there a “school” of thought (sometimes known as the “Yale” school) that develops Frei’s ideas theologically, but biblical scholarship now includes literary criticism among its tools. It is quite common to find books on the Bible that focus on particular narratives, and even preaching has been influenced by emphasis on narrative. Clearly, the ground that Frei broke has proved fertile.

Recently, though, even the category “narrative” has seemed to some to be too narrow for adequate biblical and theological understanding. In its place, “drama” is coming to the fore as the most promising way to characterize the Bible and theology because it not only deals in story, but also enactment. Drama not only creates a world and engages us in it imaginatively, as does narrative, but it also gives us a role to play in the ongoing proclamation and living out of the Christian faith. Three recent books show how drama is being employed to interpret what Christian faith is about and to connect the past with the way that faith is lived out today.

The least technical of these three books is *The Drama of Scripture: Finding Our Place in the Biblical Story*, by Craig G. Bartholomew and Michael W. Goheen. The two authors bring together strengths in different fields (biblical studies and missiology) to provide for first year university students an

account of the overarching story that the Bible tells. The stated goals of the book are, first, to present the true nature of Scripture as God's story, and second, to help students find their place in that story by articulating and sharing the biblical worldview. Though these goals are both important to the authors, the first receives the most emphasis in this book. The primary task is to show that the Bible does in fact tell a unified story, thus providing the groundwork for the second goal.

The prologue to the book sets out a brief account of the problem that the book is trying to address. The authors describe how human beings are always trying to connect discrete events into a "big story" in order to make sense of life. We all have our individual personal stories, but each personal story needs some "grand narrative" that serves to show how one's own story fits into the whole "world." The conviction of these authors is that the Bible tells the true story of the world, so it is the only reliable guide for understanding our lives. Other competing stories (coming from culture, for instance) present alternative "foundational" stories, but these competing stories provide competing values from their different worldviews and living by them leads to finding a false meaning for life. The authors want their readers to understand the Bible's "big story" so that they can choose the right story in which to understand their lives.

Because it is not obvious that the Bible tells a single story, the authors mostly direct their attention to outlining it. They compare the Bible to a cathedral with many rooms and entrances, large and complicated enough that it is hard to get a sense of the whole. Finding the main entrance is important for proper orientation, and the authors suggest that the main entrance to the Bible's story comes from two themes that work together throughout the Bible: covenant and kingdom. From Genesis to Revelation, these two themes serve to provide the structure that holds all the discrete materials in the Bible together.

Despite the priority of the word "drama" in the title, this book is more about story than it is enactment. The main way that the authors acknowledge or use drama is by dividing the story of the Bible into six acts (with an interlude). The notes do not reveal serious engagement with studies about drama, and while the role that people today play in the story is certainly recognized as important, it is not developed. The emphasis is on tracing the history of Israel, Jesus Christ, and the early church in such a way as to see how the pieces fit together. For first year university students who may not have a strong biblical background, this task may be valuable. For others who know the history and who have come to appreciate the complexity of the biblical materials, it will seem simplistic.

While this first book concentrates on the Bible, the second uses drama

to help us understand history. In *Theology and the Drama of History*, Ben Quash proposes a critical appropriation of Hans von Balthasar's theodramatics. The goal is to present a method that sees human actions, events, and contexts in relation to God's purpose. Von Balthasar criticized conceptualities (especially Hegel's) that tried to tie up the indeterminacy of history in a tidy system. Both God's freedom and human freedom require instead a description of history that allows for interaction and openness to new responses through time. Drama provides a way of conceiving history that allows for involvement of the characters which are invested in the action, attention to the particular circumstances and events that affect particular lives, social interaction, and anticipation of how events will play out.

To develop this comparison between drama and history, Quash turns to ancient Greek forms of poetic style to show how each offers a different perspective on what is taking place. Epic style, represented by the chorus, provided a detached observation and commentary on the action that was taking place in an ancient play. Lyric style, in contrast, was used for characters who were highly involved emotionally. The objectivity of epic and the subjectivity of lyric both provide important viewpoints, but drama takes place when an involved character and the overarching structure of the context interact, so that the "big picture" does not lose sight of the personal impact of events and the involved character is engaged with more than her or his own immediate experience. Just so, to be a historical person means dramatic engagement between objective reality and subjective experience. Human beings in history find themselves in a world that already exists and is moving in a certain direction, but they also shape that world through their imaginative, personal participation. History is in this sense dramatic, and it is *theodramatic* when the involved human beings are directed by and respond to the Holy Spirit's activity in the world. It is the task of theology to display this particular perspective on the drama of history.

A large portion of Quash's book is given to analysis of von Balthasar's work and to two particular thinkers, Hegel and Barth, who influenced it. Despite von Balthasar's desire to offer an alternative to totalizing systematic thinking, Quash shows how the Roman Catholic theologian himself prioritized epic structure when he encouraged receptivity, acceptance, and obedience (after the model of Mary) as the proper form of the Church. As a corrective to this tendency, Quash uses Gerard Manley Hopkins's *The Wreck of the Deutschland* to show how the proper response, even to painful events, is, not simply acceptance, but an active searching for God's presence *in* the event rather than outside it in some explanatory framework. A response that looks honestly at the pain and for God's presence can become a witness that may help others respond appropriately (dramatically) in

their own situations, neither mired in their own experience nor explaining away the experience in an objective commentary, but reading God's revelation in the event that affects them deeply.

Many of the features of drama that Quash finds valuable—temporality, followability, complexity, interaction, anticipation—are also features of narrative. Quash seems to prefer drama to narrative as a suggestive analogy for history because he often relates narrative to epic, which closes off rather than opens up possibilities. It is not clear to me that narrative necessarily becomes epic in the way that he describes it, but drama does add an element of enactment that is not usually associated with narrative. His use of Greek drama to illumine the givenness and openness of history can be a valuable way of helping theology to think about the place of the human in the world. His understanding that both God and human beings are free to interact with each other encourages activity and witness that seeks to know and enact God's purpose.

In *The Drama of Doctrine: A Canonical-Linguistic Approach to Christian Theology*, Kevin J. Vanhoozer brings together concerns about Scripture and theology that have been treated separately in the first two books. With 457 pages in its main body, this book includes a complex argument that covers (among other things) the nature of Scripture, the nature of truth, the role of doctrine in the church, the task of theology, appropriate Christian living, and even the role of pastors and bishops in the church. This ambitious project works within the framework of the Scripture principle as it was developed by Protestant orthodox theologians, but it recasts the understanding of Scripture within that framework. Vanhoozer claims that the character of the Bible is dramatic, by which he means it brings together both word and deed to show, rather than tell, us how to live in light of God's presence, speech, and action in the world. Doctrine is also dramatic, in that it provides direction for how Christians of subsequent generations can and should find their place in the drama of the Bible. We have a role to play in the ongoing work of God. The Bible provides the script by which we act, but that script allows improvisation as we enact it in different "theaters" for different "audiences." With Scripture as the norm and doctrine as the guide, Christians can be confident that their enactment of the faith in their own time and place is both truthful and fitting.

As Vanhoozer constructs his canonical-linguistic approach to theology, he seems most concerned to distinguish it from two alternatives, a simply propositional understanding of Scripture and the cultural-linguistic approach that was developed by the "Yale" school of narrative theologians, with George Lindbeck as the prime example. Regarding the former, Vanhoozer skillfully redevelops the Protestant orthodox doctrine of

Scripture so that he is able to affirm its major points (such as the unique role of Scripture as norm, its unique inspiration, its sufficiency, clarity, authority, etc.) without adopting its emphasis on true assertions. He achieves this feat by shifting attention to truthfulness as fitting enactment. God used just these words to say what God wanted to say, but these words chosen by God serve the purpose of prompting us to a certain kind of life. Regarding the latter, Vanhoozer recognizes that his concern for enactment means he has to pay attention to the community as well as Scripture, but he rejects Lindbeck's way of doing so because in his view Lindbeck has made the community the norm for Christian faith rather than the Bible. His term "canonical-linguistic" refers to the central role of Scripture as norm, even as it also recognizes the importance of the church as linguistic community in and through which we improvise how to play our roles.

As he develops his constructive proposal, Vanhoozer turns not to ancient Greek drama, as does Quash, but to contemporary studies of drama. The word "improvise," for example, may seem to imply freedom to do anything, but Vanhoozer shows how actual improvisation in theater relies on thorough knowledge of character, following certain "rules" of interaction, and paying attention to the goal of the performance. Christian improvisation, then, cannot take place without deep understanding of the drama that has already taken place in the Bible or without the guidance that doctrine can give. Vanhoozer uses theoretical analysis of drama to good effect, especially in reconceiving the atonement. He employs technical dramatic language coming from improvisation to describe how God responds to, uses, and transforms the crucifixion into the central reconciling event of history.

Vanhoozer argues, as Frei once did about narrative, that drama fits the character of the Bible and so it makes sense to turn to theory of drama to understand Christian faith. The categories that come from drama, though, are utilized in such a complicated way that they are not always clear. For instance, dramas need directors, but the Holy Spirit, doctrine, and even bishops and pastors all direct. Even if humans serve as "assistant directors," another problem emerges. Pastors, for instance, turn out to be both assistant directors and players. Doctrine both gives direction and advises directors (as dramaturge). Script and improvisation are sometimes in tension because performances with scripted dialogue are quite different from performances without scripted dialogue. Vanhoozer admits that any analogy has its limits, but the difficulty of applying dramatic categories consistently raises quite a few questions about those limits that he does not address.

Furthermore, Vanhoozer, especially in the second half of his book, draws from many other analogies besides drama. If the idea is that the character of the Bible itself supports drama as the superior comparison, then it seems odd that numerous other comparisons (narrative, grammar, music, games, maps) make their way back into the discussion. At one point, Vanhoozer develops the idea of the Bible as an atlas, containing different maps to help us find our way. He connects the “direction” that a map gives to the “direction” that is needed in drama, but most maps by themselves (for instance, without a highlighted route) do not supply direction. What they do is provide a description of the territory that can be used to find one’s way to many different places on it. Dramatic direction is different from the orientation that a map provides, and the need to make drama the central image results in a forced comparison.

This abundance of mixed metaphors in Vanhoozer’s work calls to my mind an observation Stephen Toulmin once made about models in science. Scientists use models to explain the phenomena they observe, and those models open up avenues of discovery that can provide further understanding. Treating the models as actual depictions of the phenomena, though, is very misleading and can result (especially for a layperson) in misunderstanding. Theologians do well to keep in mind that the metaphors we use to understand the Bible can also be misleading. The Bible is not any more a stage production than it is a novel. Quash and Vanhoozer treat narrative as a genre of literature that is finally limited (and perhaps unsuited) for displaying features of the Bible, theology, and history that help Christians live their faith, but drama as a genre will also fall short. While theologians use drama as a welcome new model to explore enactment, we should be careful not to treat it as another general study into which Christian faith needs to be fit (the problem that Frei warned about initially). The fact that Quash and Vanhoozer explain and use drama in very different ways underscores its suggestive, rather than definitive, character.

To my way of thinking, both narrative and drama as specific genres come into existence because they represent something deep in human life, that is, a way of thinking (for instance, connecting events or ideas into an understandable whole) and acting (for instance, concretizing or embodying something that has been imagined) that we employ across many different kinds of human endeavors. That is why so many different metaphors can be used to illumine what the Bible or theology is like. Rather than play these illuminating comparisons off each other so that one seems better or more central than another, we would do well to see how they support each other to help us understand the fullness and complexity of Christian faith.

As a woman, I cannot help but have another concern. It is one thing to

recognize the need for fitting enactment in new situations; it is another to face hindrances to enactment that arise from past performances in the Bible or history. These books stress faithful creativity, but they do not pay much attention to how hard it can sometimes be to take one's place in the ongoing drama. To his credit, Vanhoozer does discuss how revised understandings of the past are possible and how the Holy Spirit may lead us into "new truths" that need not contradict the old. What I continue to wonder is the extent to which in his understanding "just these words" that God assured would be written down by the apostles can be understood differently. What actually happens when the words "women should be silent in the churches" provide the script for thinking about women's preaching, especially as ordained ministers? Does the category "improvisation" allow us to enact the opposite of what is said? This question has relevance for many issues beyond those specific to women and may provide a sort of test for the fruitfulness of this approach. It remains to be seen whether drama is helpful for working through problems such as these, or whether commitments quite apart from drama will determine how those questions are answered.

Randy WOODLEY

Paved with Good Intention...Sometimes
A Review Essay

The Colony: The Harrowing True Story of the Exiles of Molokai
John Tayman

New York, NY: A Lisa Drew Book-Scribner
2006, 421 pp., hardcover, \$27.50

By Order of the President: FDR and the Internment of Japanese Americans

Greg Robinson.

Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press
2001, 322 pp., paper, \$19.95

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The Colony: The Harrowing True Story of the Exiles of Molokai

It takes an incredible amount of research and a great editing process to make a non-fiction book like this one, read like a novel. In this feat, John Tayman has surpassed any expectations. His research concerning the “longest and deadliest instance of medical segregation in American history” is admirable.

In hindsight, there is much more known about leprosy (Hanson’s disease) now than what was known during most of the 106 active years of the Molokai Leper Colony. For example, most forms of leprosy are not usually as contagious as people once thought and in order to contract it, most often people must contain a genetic disposition towards the disease. Many of those banished never actually even had leprosy but the level of concern was high enough to cause undue diagnosis to occur often. It was however, a plan that was executed according to the best medical opinion of the day.

What many of us did not know was that the disease was declared illegal in Hawaii and diseased people were actually hunted down as criminals and forced into a life sentence in exile on a long, and nearly uninhabitable peninsula on the island of Molokai. This patient/prison camp became what visiting authors, such as Robert Louis Stevenson called “a prison fortified by nature” with the highest sea cliffs in the world, and Jack London referred to as “the pit of Hell” and “the most cursed place on earth.” Indeed, during the first five years the Molokai Leper Colony had a mortality rate of almost 50 percent. Rumors about the Colony that spread throughout the Islands were so egregious that sometimes potential prisoners would fight to the death to stay an exile. Such was the case of Koolau and his wife and child as told in the first chapter of the book.

Tayman creates for us a reasonable understanding of all parties concerned without placing undue blame. Where there was negligence—he points it out with documentation. He does not fall prey to making two dimensional heroes and heroines. This is not to say that heroic people do not exist in the story, not the least of whom is a young Belgian priest who volunteered in his sick brother’s stead to serve as a missionary to Hawaii. Enter Father Damien, the Catholic priest who works selflessly to allow Molokai residents once again to feel the sense of dignity afforded most human beings in the

midst of what often amounted to lawless anarchy. Father Damien observed the distance created via the precautionary measures, by staff and other workers to avoid contracting the disease. Within just a few days of his arrival Father Damien throws off his mask and gloves in order to relate to the people as one of them. He eventually contracted the disease and died—with no regrets. His own words tell his story, “I am a leper...blessed be the Good God!”

Perhaps the greatest gift in *The Colony* is the stories (untold before now) of the everyday lives of the over 8,000 victims in this cruel confinement. The residents of Molokai who were able to survive often ghastly and inhumane conditions, deserve admiration and recognition due to Tayman’s uncovering another ugly chapter in American history. In later years, the conditions at the Colony ultimately improved. The constant bad publicity eventually had a negative effect on tourism and, medical conditions continually improved in the advancement of treatments for the disease.

Today, there are still a number of residents at the Molokai Colony who are the survivors of what is now considered a very flawed experiment. In 2004 the average age of the residents was 76, with many of them having spent over forty years in exile. Their options are few. Their memories are obviously painful but one can only hope that some new expectation has emerged in them, knowing that their story is now being brought to light.

By Order of the President: FDR and the Internment of Japanese Americans

Executive Order 9066 (signed February 19, 1942) was formally revoked in 1976 by President Gerald Ford. That order, given by President Franklin Roosevelt, under pressure from a group of U.S. Army officers who feared espionage and imminent attack from the Japanese on the West coast, allowed the Army to create a series of prison camps that would forcibly incarcerate thousands of Japanese Americans, and remove over 110,000 from their homes for over three years — especially those in the Western states.

Roosevelt died in 1945 and by December of that year, all the “internment camps” were closed. In 1980 Congress authorized the *Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians* (CWRIC) to recommend an action, due to pressure from Japanese Americans. Among the eventual results would be monetary reparations and an immediate strong statement that read as follows:

Executive order 9066 was not justified by military necessity, and the decisions that followed from it—exclusion, detention, the ending of detention and the ending of exclusion were not founded upon military considerations. The broad historical causes that shaped these decisions were race prejudice, war hysteria, and a

failure of political leadership (251).

What Greg Robinson does for us in this book is to help us understand the complexities of such a defective move. This is not so much a book about the conditions of prisoners during confinement but rather it is about the circumstances in our democracy that can lead to such a breach in the democratic idea. Robinson especially focuses on FDR's role in the process. Roosevelt's tag as a humanitarian is subtly stripped from him as the weaker, more pressured President emerges under Robinson's investigations. Robinson's findings eventually lead the reader to concur with the CWRIC report that there was "a failure of political leadership."

The author gives us a good view of the historic events surrounding the internment and a great analysis of how such a travesty could occur. For example, while Roosevelt deplored open prejudice, he favored immigration for "the right kind of European blood." He was opposed to mixed-marriages and against promotion of Japanese land rights because he felt this would make the conditions for intermarriage between Japanese and Whites more favorable. Roosevelt believed in disbursement of immigrants and assimilation into the dominant (read White) American society. All this is documented through Robinson's historic investigation. Additionally, he shows that other viable options to internment were presented to the President but were given little consideration. Favoring "mass evacuation" as a solution, Roosevelt's position flew contrary to the views of the Attorney General and even FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover, who "contended that mass evacuation was unnecessary."

Anti-Japanese sentiment, especially on the West coast, was replete after Pearl Harbor. This was the reality of the political climate in which FDR had to work and to which he would eventually succumb. The climate of open, and at the same time ubiquitous prejudice, also produced opportunities for greed that were waiting to seize the Japanese market share in agriculture, land holdings and other areas of the West. Western White farmers organized groups such as the White American Nurserymen of Los Angeles, the Grower Shipper Vegetable Association and Western Growers Protective Association which sought to force the Japanese out of the market and obtain their lands. Roosevelt did little to reverse such systemic racism.

Robinson's book is a challenge for us today as we seek a just and democratic society. It is also a reminder that tyranny can come swiftly with just the stroke of a pen, and from leaders and governments whom one would not immediately dismiss as tyrannical. In the case of Robinson's telling of the Japanese internment, all the right players are present to make a classic Shakespearian play; the king, the generals, the angry citizens and

the victims, unfortunately made a real story of another American tragedy.

A View

The unfortunate truth is that these two stories are all too familiar to us as Americans and to us as human beings. As a Cherokee Indian, I know well the story of the “Trail of Tears.” What most Americans don’t realize is that there were hundreds of “trail of tears” stories among our Indian people. Let us not forget that the Indian reservation system, which continues to keep Native Americans marginalized, was innovated upon by a Jeffersonian idea and then advanced by Christian missionaries.

Another example of unnecessary racial segregation was the forced abduction and systematic cultural destruction of Native Americans into Government-sponsored and church-endorsed residential schools for almost a century. This is the dysfunctional “elephant in the living room” for Native Americans today. In 1877, the first site of what would become over a hundred of these Indian boarding schools throughout the U.S. and Canada was located in Carlisle, Pennsylvania. Their mantra became the call of missions, “kill the Indian, save the man.” The conditions were much the same regardless of location or country: strict and swift punishment for speaking or acting Indian; a rigorous military lifestyle, malnourishment, isolation from family, long and difficult work hours and short school hours for industrial school. Common jobs for the students after graduation were domestic servants for women and the military, mostly as “cannon fodder,” for men. Severe humiliation was a common punishment. Also beatings, rape, sodomy, and torture happened much more frequently than most admit.

Add to these tragedies, the cruelties of slavery and then Jim Crow laws, Irish Immigrants as Civil War cannon fodder, the forced sterilization of Black males and Native women, the detainment of suspected Middle Eastern terrorist, the Patriot Act and the list could go on. What these all have in common is the fact that we as human beings tend to allow ourselves to be grouped into “us and them” scenarios. What is also shown is that we constantly breach our own sense of justice in order to deny justice to “them” (whoever they may be).

Why do we do it? Fear? Expediency? A false sense of entitlement? Fear is one great factor. Expediency is perhaps too great an American value. A sense of entitlement that we may feel guarantees our freedom over some other person or group’s freedom. We allow “fear mongers” to peddle their wares without much questioning. Perhaps because we are conditioned to it, we accept too easily the lines that are drawn between “us” and “them.” Fear comes in many varieties. Fear from without—protection; Fear from within—betrayal. Fear that is based on flawed logic, poor facts and public

sway are too easily cast and draw our allegiance.

As Americans we love efficiency and expediency. It allows us to move quickly from attempting to solve one problem to solving the “next” problem. In our systematic, modern quest for efficiency, we have often forgotten that human beings require and deserve more thought and deliberation than what we are usually willing to give. In fact, humans sometimes require extraordinary time-tables in order to solve human problems.

Democracy is just that. It takes many voices to not only solve perceived problems, but even just to understand the problems. If a problem involves human beings—it is guaranteed to be complex and not easily solved without much deliberation and debate—especially including those who will be most effected by the outcome. We must begin to question sooner what the loudest voices who would cause us to bend and break our own democratic principles (in order to gain “freedom” or “security”) have to gain. Greed? Power? History shows that they are almost always figured in the equation somewhere.

This leads to the question of accountability. Even under the best social theory, without a strict accountability during the *whole process*—something will usually go wrong. Often, as in the case of the lepers of Molokai, or in the case of the students of Indian boarding schools, the ones whom we are trying to “help” become the victims. This often is the result of short-sighted thinking. When the whole of the process is considered and not just the outcome, better results are sure to follow.

I am thankful for brave authors who will not allow travesties such as have been mentioned, to pass undetected through American history without a critical evaluation. As mission-minded folk, we should be the first to implement these principles of accountability and critique and the last to acquiesce to the mistakes of the past. Honest “truth-seeking missiles” such as these, create the opportunity for these types of unfortunate historic events to not be repeated. It is obvious that the voices of such critique must be made louder and more widespread in order for us as Americans and as humans to call upon our “better angels” more consistently.

BOOK NOTES

An Introduction to World Methodism

Kenneth Cracknell and Susan J. White

New York: Cambridge University Press

2005, 298 pp., paper, \$24.99

Reviewed by Kenneth J. Collins

Employing a broad ecumenical lens, Cracknell and White attempt to offer the serious reader an introduction to the history, theology, spirituality, worship, and social ethics of Methodism. Their goal is not only to bring about greater understanding among Methodists from a diversity of backgrounds such that they might exclaim, “Ah! Now I see why they do things differently over there!” but also to engage non-Methodists who as a consequence might reply, “Ah! So that’s what makes Methodists tick.”

Sensitive to the problems caused by the hagiographies of John and Charles Wesley and the triumphalistic accounts of Methodism that have been a part of the tradition, the authors attempt to avoid any suggestion that Methodism is a “normative pattern for all Christians,” nor are they crying “back to Wesley.” Such an approach, however, may be an over-reaction to some very real problems in past historical method. For one thing, the heart of historic Methodism ever embraced a reforming impulse in terms of the inculcation of holy love in an abundance of graces. Such a concern, which is at the heart of Scriptural Christianity as well, is as relevant today as it was in the eighteenth century—and across a diversity of social locations. Indeed, even in his own day, John Wesley recognized some common elements that bear mentioning: people whether in England, Georgia, Holland or Antigua are united in their sin; they are also, therefore, united in their need for grace.

Though this work has many strengths, especially in its social and cultural analysis of what is termed “revivalist” and “mahogany” Methodism, its theological forays are at times interrupted by factual error. To illustrate, the authors claim that beyond the letter of John Wesley to his brother Samuel Wesley, Jr. in October 1738, “there is no other reference in any of his copious writings to what has come to be called the ‘Aldersgate

experience.” However, Wesley specifically referred to May 24, 1738 over seven years later in a missive to “John Smith” on December 30, 1745. Beyond this, though the authors insist that Wesley’s confidence in himself never faltered after April 1739, once again the primary evidence paints a much different picture as revealed in the very depressing, though frank, letter from John to his brother, Charles in 1766. Add to these factual errors a number of other missteps, especially in terms of the temporal elements entailed in entire sanctification as Wesley himself had expressed them, and the reader can readily discern that it might have been better, after all, for these authors to have gone “back to Wesley.”

Methodism: Empire of the Spirit

David Hempton

New Haven: Yale University Press

2005, 304 pp., paper, \$18.00

Reviewed by Kenneth J. Collins

David Hempton, University Professor at Boston University, has written a fresh, lively and carefully researched work on Methodism as an international movement that compares quite favorably with earlier, larger attempts. Recognizing that Methodism was the most important religious development since the Reformation, Hempton contends that by the nineteenth century, Methodism had helped to create a formidable empire of the spirit.

For those who only have a smattering of knowledge of Methodism this movement can appear to be quite baffling at times, and under researched caricatures have unfortunately emerged. To correct this tendency, Hempton rightly focuses on eight “dialectical frictions” that not only become the chapter headings of the book (“competition and symbiosis,” “enlightenment and enthusiasm,” for example) but also help to portray the variegated and sophisticated nature of Methodism. Accordingly, Chapter Two, Enlightenment and Enthusiasm, is especially good in that it portrays Methodism’s emphasis on life in the Holy Spirit and its proclivity for instantaneous conversion against the backdrop of Anglicanism’s ruling episcopacy, Bishop Gibson in particular, who took exception to the jump and stir of Methodist “enthusiasm” and much preferred to view the Christian faith, as do so many mainline folk today, as “a gradual improvement of grace and goodness, along with the disciplined practice of moral duties.”

Though the topic of conversion is clearly out of vogue with many

contemporary researchers who much prefer to view the entire Christian life as a “conversion,” thereby emptying the term of much of its meaning, Hempton is good enough a historian not to confuse his own social location, with all its preferences and judgments, with eighteenth and nineteenth century realities. Thus this gifted scholar accurately notes that the preaching careers of most early Methodist preachers began with “keenly remembered conversion narratives,” that in a real sense were part of an existential continuum that did not shy away from the reality of death. Indeed, conversion and death were points on a linear scale and “everything in between had its real meaning within those coordinates.” Put another way, dying well, and in an abundance of grace, was the mark of an early Methodist.

Though *Methodism: Empire of the Spirit* is characterized by a much needed balance in so many areas, it does struggle at times to discern the level of sophistication that characterized early Methodist theology, a theology that not only emerged from the pen and hymns of John and Charles Wesley, but also arose in the give and take of the early Methodist Conferences. Thus, Hempton’s description of Methodist spirituality as focusing on the “need for human beings to take control of their spiritual destinies,” lacks the balance and careful nuance, the “dialectical frictions” that should be evident here as well. But despite this reservation, it must be readily noted that Hempton has written a work that will likely be well received by those both within and without Methodism, for it casts light on this dynamic and animated movement, a movement that once was a veritable empire of the spirit.

Arminian Theology: Myths and Realities

Roger E. Olson

Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press

2006, 250 pp., paper, \$25.00

Reviewed by Kenneth J. Collins

Demonstrating that the recent offerings in the field of evangelical/Arminian scholarship constitute not a fad but a trend, Roger Olson has written a carefully researched work that aptly portrays Arminian theology at its best. Maintaining that Arminianism is so rarely understood and commonly misrepresented—since many Calvinist critics have “wittingly or unwittingly borne false witness against Arminius and Arminianism,”—this gifted author clears away many of the stereotypes and half-truths (such as Arminianism is Pelagian or at best semi-Pelagian), that have remained much too long. This task is accomplished in part by examining the writings

of Arminius, Simon Episcopius, Philip Limborch, John Wesley as well as those of nineteenth and twentieth century theologians.

By examining and then debunking ten key myths surrounding Arminian theology (such as the heart of Arminianism is belief in free will or that Arminian theology denies the sovereignty of God) Olson cogently makes his case not only that Arminian theology is a legitimate form of Protestant orthodoxy, but also that Arminianism is a “legitimate evangelical theological option.” As a consequence of this argument Arminians “should not be ashamed to wear the title proudly.” With an eye on the current state of relations between evangelical Arminians and Calvinists, Olson concludes the work with four key rules of engagement for these evangelical cousins who have been distant at times, but who may actually have more in common than some of the heated polemics of the past have suggested. This is timely, splendidly written work, unparalleled in many respects, and therefore warrants a careful reading by both Calvinist and Arminian alike.

Wilderness Forever: Howard Zahniser and the Path to the Wilderness Act

Mark W. T. Harvey

Seattle: University of Washington Press

2005, 325 pp., cloth, \$35.00

Reviewed by Frances S. Adeney

Louisville Presbyterian Theological Seminary

The *Wilderness Act*—sounds political. *Wilderness Forever*—sounds environmentally driven. This book describes both—the political process and negotiations involved in securing for the American people nationally-designated wilderness areas, and the environmentally driven Howard Zahniser, the man who worked tirelessly for over twenty-five years for an act of congress that secured “an enduring resource of wilderness” through congressional designation of federally-owned areas as “wilderness areas” (*Wilderness Act* p.iv).

What becomes immediately apparent, upon embarking on this journey through reading *Wilderness Forever*, is that both the battle and the environmental vigor were intensely spiritual for Howard Zahniser. Beginning his career with the Bureau of Biological Survey and the Department of the Interior, Zahniser’s wilderness writing and political lobbying included writing for *Nature* magazine and editing *Living Wilderness*, the magazine of the Wilderness Society. As manager of the Wilderness Society in Washington D.C. for over two decades, Zahniser developed his

conviction that the time spent in the wilderness was both healing and personally transforming formed the central conviction that drove his political and organizational work (91). "He believed that wilderness was part of the eternal and an essential part of American society and culture" (5).

That belief grew through Zahniser's boyhood, spent on the banks of the Allegeny River in a family of devoted Free Methodists who were serious about both mission work and issues of politics and social problems (11). Building upon the leadership models of his pastor father and missionary-minded mother, Zahniser came to see the safeguarding of wilderness areas as his lifelong task.

Toward that end he focused his skills as an activist and leader, bringing a generosity and understanding attitude to supporters and opponents alike. He could appreciate cities and revel in farmlands and fields of corn but the wilderness was "so remote from the artificial distractions of all our machines and routine contrivances," that it took on an intensely human quality for Zahniser (91).

As the preservation of one wilderness area after another came under attack during the economic boom following the Great Depression, Zahniser and his coworkers realized that a more all-encompassing approach to preservation of wilderness areas was needed. The timber and forest products industry posed the first threat during those years but other threats to the wilderness were proliferating. As lumber interests battled over the boundaries of Olympic National Park in 1947, oil-drilling possibilities threatened the Ponderosa Pine forest area of the Teton National Forest.

Beginning a comprehensive and positive campaign for "saving" wilderness areas, Zahniser quoted Reinhold Niebuhr's speech at the Assemble of World Council of Churches in Amsterdam in 1948: "There is so little health in the whole of our modern civilization that one cannot find the island of order from which to proceed against disorder." For Zahniser, the wilderness became that "island of order", a base of reference for American society (99). He developed a comprehensive statement on the values of wilderness that was published by the Legislative Reference Service in 1949.

As he continued to give testimony for wilderness protection of specific areas, working to prevent dam construction in the New York Adirondacks and Echo Park on the borders of Utah and Colorado, Zahniser began to realize how permeable those areas were to both industry and government intervention (114). Between 1947 and 1953, Zahniser spent time in many American wilderness areas and became familiar not only with varieties of beauty experienced among them but also the management dilemmas they posed. Not only boundary protection was necessary, but land inside of the boundaries need to be healed. Overgrazing in Southwest wilderness

areas, the complicated issues of fire management in wilderness areas, and the task of preserving lands as a home for wild things called for more vigorous action.

He focused that action from the Wilderness Society office in Washington, D.C. where he worked to make the organization both more visible and more influential among lawmakers, agency officials, and the press. Getting wilderness on the nation's political and governmental agendas was the objective—a vision of a “healthful and pleasant world in which to live” was the long term goal. To that end he worked for preservation of special areas—areas designated as “wilderness areas.”

Mark Harvey' tells the story of that work up to its fulfillment in the Wilderness Act of 1964, four months after Zahniser's death. Harvey repeatedly reminds the reader of the spiritual nature of Zahniser's work for wilderness preservation. “To Zahniser,” he writes, “wilderness was nature in its purest state, largely unaffected by human activity, where animals and plants thrived undisturbed, and where solitude reigned” (78). “Promoting the protection of animals and their habitat...the protection of wilderness, involved an ethic of stewardship toward God's creation that the Bible had taught him” (39).

Harvey's work is a fascinating read for those interested in how Christian convictions partner with environmental concerns and political action. It is well-researched and thoroughly documented, making it an excellent text for courses on environmental studies. Perhaps best of all, it is a fine tribute to a man whose determination, patience, and generous spirit inspires those who wish to serve both God and their country.

GRACE NOTES

LAYERING SMALL GRACE UPON SMALL GRACE

TERRY C. MUCK

God's truth comes to us from different places at different times. Each truth event sounds a small note of grace that together, if we listen, make up the musical score of God active in the world today. Listen to these ten small notes of grace from ten recent books.

Jaroslav Pelikan
Interpreting the Bible and the Constitution
New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004

This is the kind of comparative book most great scholars dream about writing, but few attain the stature to do so. Before his death last year, Pelikan found himself in rarified air, so respected that neither biblical scholars nor constitutional law experts could mount much of a campaign against a church historian's poaching on their turf.

Pelikan's interest was piqued by observing that both Christians and Americans have allegiance toward sacred texts; in the case of Christians, the Bible, in the case of Americans, the United States Constitution. Both advocate living according to the teachings of these respective texts. Both realize that their texts were written long ago and in order for them to provide guidance and meaning today, a certain amount of interpretation is necessary. Both have professionals charged with guiding us in this application of our sacred texts, theologians and constitutional lawyers and Supreme Court judges. Both also recognize that lay men and women have interpretive roles to play.

The resulting discussion makes for a fascinating book. Learning takes place because this unlikely comparison forces us out of our insular worlds. The trick, Pelikan infers, is to be able to retain the old, the tradition, even as we create what seems new, appropriate to our context. A text: "Every teacher of the law who has been instructed about the kingdom of heaven is like the owner of a house who brings out of his storeroom new treasures as well as old" (Matthew 13:52).

Cormac McCarthy
No Country for Old Men
New York: Random House, 2005

America's greatest novelist since Faulkner has produced what some critics have called a "potboiler." It is a great read with a disturbing message. The story is about Texas good old boy Llewelyn Moss who while hunting in the remote desert of West Texas finds the leftovers of a drug deal gone bad: bullet ridden SUVs, dead bodies, kilos of heroin, and two million dollars. Against his better judgment, he takes the money and sets off a chain reaction of violence and escalating evil hard to imagine and impossible to control.

McCarthy's other novels are also set in West Texas and Mexico. They are not Louis L'Amour westerns, however. They deal with good and evil, yes, but refuse to accept the old simplistic fault lines between the good guys and the bad guys. They are stories that reflect Tolstoy's observation that evil resides not "out there" but deep within every human breast.

Evil is ubiquitous, of course. And perhaps, strictly speaking, it has never been rational. Even if one is willing to postulate a fallen, sinful world, the evil we see does not fit any rational choice model yet designed. McCarthy's message is that the irrationality of evil seems to be increasing rather than decreasing. His implied question: Where is the hope?

Karl Barth
The Church and the Churches
Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 2005

This is a reprint of an address Barth gave to the 1937 World Conference on Faith and Order at Edinburgh. Barth's presupposition, of course, is that the ideal state is universal acknowledgment of the oneness and centrality of Jesus Christ. The problem to be addressed is the multiplicity of the churches, which Barth says hurts the mission of the church to ancient religions, modern ideologies, the Christian Church itself, and individual members of the churches. But most of all, the multiplicity of the churches is an indictment of our faith in the Lordship of Christ.

The solution to the problem is not tolerance of all diversity, nor federations and alliances of different churches, not even the ecumenical movement. These may all be good things in a penultimate sense, but they must start with the surrender of our particularity to the oneness of Christ. And individual problems are solved by listening to Christ and then choosing with a clear *sic et non*, the way of Christ. All issues regarding confessions, revelations, dogmas, and ordinances, are already solved by

Christ's oneness and in grappling with them our task is to listen for the voice of Christ together.

As always with Barth, his emphasis is on the universality of the Christian faith, which always, everywhere overrides the particularity of the churches. Barth is always a good read when the important issues of contextualization threaten to swamp our commitments to the gospel.

John W. O'Malley

Four Cultures of the West

Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2004

O'Malley distinguishes four cultures in elite United State discourse, each with their own goals and styles of "conversation": Prophetic culture whose goal is revealed truth and style is proclamation; Academic culture whose goal is empirical truth and style is argumentation; Humanist culture whose goal is the common good and style is dialogue; and Art culture whose goal is beauty and style is performance.

The author describes the historical development of all four cultures, going back to the Middle East, Greece, and Rome. Each of the four cultures is personified: e.g., prophets Martin Luther and Martin Luther King, scholars Aristotle and Aquinas, humanists Homer and Erasmus, and artists Justinian and Michelangelo. Emphasis is placed on the style of discourse each favors, since when they conflict they tend to do so because proclamation, argumentation, dialogue, and performance don't easily mesh.

The four cultures often, however, see themselves as complementary to one another rather than competitive, with some historical figures seeming to occupy two or more of these worlds. The value of a descriptive paradigm like this is that by seeing why the cultures might clash, and how they have in history, the possibility of sympathetic understanding among them increases.

Wayne C. Booth

The Rhetoric of Rhetoric: The Quest for Effective Communication

Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2004

This book is an excellent introduction to the history and practice of rhetoric—its ups and downs as a discipline, its good and bad practices, and why it is so important today. The author, an emeritus professor from the University of Chicago, chooses a broad definition for rhetoric: "The entire range of resources that human beings share for producing effects on one another." Rhetoric, he says, is about communication: making arguments for issues, persuading others of their value, and listening to others' points of view.

Listening rhetoric is Booth's constructive contribution to the kind of communication necessary today in a world where our public audiences are increasingly global and our issues are increasingly interconnected. Serious attempts to understand where people are coming from has the effect, he argues, of tipping the balance toward good rhetoric. He gives major examples of good and bad rhetoric from the fields of education, media studies, and politics. At times his disagreements with President Bush and the war in Iraq make the book seem more focused on that issue than on rhetoric—but it certainly is a handy and important issue from which to draw conclusions about public communication these days.

Christian communicator — rhetors — can learn much from this book. Mission, evangelism, and witness are, after all, religious rhetoric at their core, and learning to do each better is something all Christians should be committed to.

Malise Ruthven

Historical Atlas of Islam

Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2004

This atlas introduces the reader to a history of Islam, using both short narrative descriptions and elegant, four-color maps. In word and picture one is led from the time of Muhammad in the seventh century to the 2003 movements, organizations, and influences that characterize modern Islam. Most of us need few reminders of Islam's importance in the world today: over one billion Muslim adherents, control over much of the world's oil supply, and a universalistic religious urge rivaled only by Christianity's.

This means that to understand the world today, one must understand Islam. And there is much to understand. Embedded in the history revealed in these maps and illustrations are answers to questions about why Islam and modernity create such a volatile mix, why the kind of democracy Westerners espouse does not relate to the Muslim consciousness, why human rights is such a flash point for Islamdom, and why despite an intimate and common history, Christians and Muslims have such a contentious relationship in the early years of the 21st century.

It may be helpful to Christians interested in mission to Muslims to know the intensity of their own mission effort to the rest of the world. The maps in this superb volume show the growth of this increasingly sophisticated world religion. And they also suggest that such a complex civilizational force might well be the greatest mission challenge of our era.

Gregory MacDonald
The Evangelical Universalist
 Eugene Oregon: Cascade Books, 2006

If evangelicals were to embrace universalism, the belief that one's eternal destiny is not fixed at death and that those in hell can repent and that everyone will eventually do this, then the first thing one must do is show that this is what the Bible teaches. Gregory MacDonald presents a careful and plausible reading of biblical texts to show why he believes this is what the Bible teaches. This is the most thorough part of this book. It is a biblical case for universal reconciliation.

The second step would be to create a theology that supports such a reading of the texts. MacDonald goes some ways toward this. He engages the current literature that supports an evangelical universalism well. And he engages a few of the theological issues that the position raises and the theologians and philosophers who, mostly, support this position.

As for the pronouncing, arguing, persuading, and performing part of the task—the convincing other evangelicals that this is what we should believe, the rhetorical part—he really only implicitly addresses those issues. That he chooses to write the book under a pseudonym is his clearest statement of what kind of a rhetorical strategy is called for in championing this position. A good book for those interested in constructive evangelical theology.

Rebecca Y. Kim
God's New Whiz Kids? Korean American Evangelicals on Campus
 New York University Press, 2006

The idea of this book is based on demographics: Asian American students form increasingly large percentages of the student populations of UC Berkeley, UCLA, Harvard, Yale, and other elite American universities. Even more pronounced, though, is the dominance of Asian American students in the evangelical campus groups at these same universities. Just one example, duplicated at all these universities: There are more than 50 evangelical campus groups at UC Berkeley and 80 percent of the students in those groups are Asian American.

The overall issue this development raises in the mind of the author of this study comes from the fact that these groups are not multiracial or even pan-Asian. They are typically single ethnic groups, whether Chinese, Japanese, Korean, or white. Why, the author asks, does a religion like evangelical Christianity which proclaims a universal message for all peoples at all places, divide along strictly ethnic lines?

To find out she studies in some detail the second generation Korean

American (SGKA) student groups at one of these large, secular institutions (which remains anonymous). She concludes that ethnicity and religion have similar goals related to identity and meaning making and thus support one another. A fascinating and important study.

Manuel Castells

The Information Age: Economy, Society, and Culture

Volume I: The Rise of the Network Society (1996)

Volume II: The Power of Identity (1997)

Volume III: End of Millenium (1998)

Oxford: Blackwell

If you ever wondered where the theoretical base for the *Lexus and the Olive Tree*, and *Jihad vs. McWorld* came from, look no further. The ideas, however derived, come from the world's greatest living sociologist, Manuel Castells, who between 1996-1998 published a trilogy collectively called *The Information Age: Economy, Society, and Culture*. You may not have time to read 1503 fairly dense pages, and/or prefer to read the popularized versions from Friedman, Barber, Jenkins, et al. You should, however, know it is there.

It explains in compelling detail:

The decline of sovereign states' power and the new power bases;
The dramatic effects of the information technology revolution;
What personal identity and meaning are becoming in the information age;

How criminals are adjusting their operations to these new networks;

How the conflicting trends towards globalization and tribalization create the social worlds in which we live;

And much more.

If you have time to read just one of the three volumes I recommend the second, *The Power of Identity*. For us, the question of what it means to be Christian (or Jewish or Muslim or Hindu or Buddhist), that is, the question of our religious identity is compelling. Castells shows us how the information age has thrown the questions surrounding religious identity and meaning up in the air. This can, in some cases, reduce its importance. In others, however, a single reference point of meaning is the only thing that can sort out the complexity of the modern world. Complex identity confusion, then, becomes an opportunity to tell the story of Jesus.

Jimmy Carter

Our Endangered Values: America's Moral Crisis

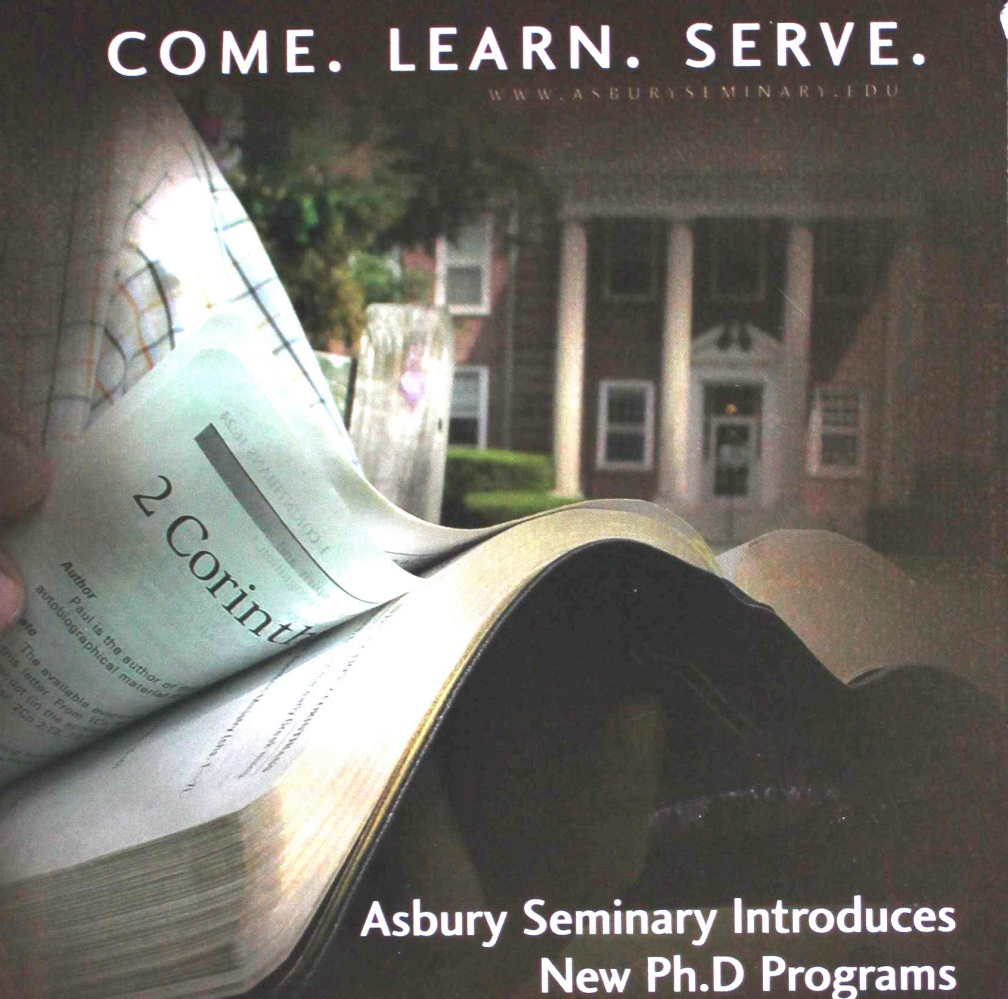
New York: Simon and Schuster, 2005

At the other end of the accessibility spectrum from Castells is Jimmy Carter, who is as far from technical sociology as Jimmy is from James. This book is obviously meant to be a challenge to the so-called religious right's championing of values debates in recent elections. So in many respects it must be read as a partisan political book.

Even if you are a Republican, however, you cannot dismiss this book simply on partisan grounds. At the very least, Carter models what every politician must be able to do today: that is, articulate how his or her faith influences his or her role as a public figure. The old answer that it doesn't simply won't do anymore. And the "new" answer that some seem to hold, that political power must be used to champion sectarian religious dogmas, won't do either. Any work that tries to articulate a position somewhere between those two extremes is worth reading. This book is worth reading.

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